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STRATHERN;

OR

LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

II.

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LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

How like a Comedy is life!
With shifting scenes and changes rife,
Some sad, some gay; but to the wise,
A moral lesson each supplies.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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STRATHIERN.

CHAPTER XXX.

O Ridicule! No love's so strong
As to resist thy presence long;
Nor friendship, though devoted, true,
Can faithful rest when thou'rt in view.
At thy dread laugh, behold friends fly,
With crimson'd cheek and downcast eye;
Of thy malicious sneer afraid,
They shun the victim thou hast made.
Then ye who love or friendship prize,
Beware of ridicule, if wise.

When Mrs. Maclaurin's carriage drove to the door of the hotel, on her return from the Corso, Lord Alexander Beaulieu was standing at his window, and shrank back with a feeling of shame mingled with anger at the excessive gaudiness and bad taste of her whole equipage. "Ye Gods! what a set-out!" exclaimed he, "and how that absurd woman exposes herself! Was there ever such an absurd exhibition?"

But, if vexed at her equipage, what was his shame and rage when he beheld her descend from her carriage in the ridiculous costume she had adopted, and saw on her person and attire the traces of the war of *bonbons*, in which she had taken so conspicuous a part!

"This abominable vulgarian will certainly drive me into insanity," thought he, "and is herself a fit subject for a lunatic asylum."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu had endeavoured to persuade Mrs. Maclaurin to relinquish going to the Corso on that day, but had found that she was so resolutely bent on witnessing the gaities of the Carnival, that, without a rupture with her, he dared not further urge the subject: so having, with much difficulty, excused himself

from attending her there, on the often resorted to plea of the impropriety of his being seen with her until they were married, he was compelled to make a virtue of necessity, and let her follow her own inclinations. He was, however, by no means prepared for the ludicrous exhibition she intended to make at the Carnival; and thought that her appearing in the Corso in any other guise than a morning dress of richer materials, and, perhaps, brighter colours than would be selected by the generality of ladies, was so wholly out of the question, that it never occurred to him to counsel her on the subject. Bitterly did he now regret not having done so; and, while indulging in self-accusation on this point, he felt his dislike to his betrothed bride increase tenfold. "What a monster!" thought he. "The exhibition she has made of herself this day will rise up in judgment against me when she will bear my name, and I shall be pointed at as the husband of that dreadful woman, who exposed herself in the face of all Rome at the Carnival." While his lordship was giving way to these agreeable reflections, Durnford, his *valet de chambre*, to whom he had given a few hours' *congé*, that he might go to the Corso, and behold its amusements, entered his room, with a face full of wonder, which it was clear he only waited to be questioned about, to enter into a detailed account of the cause. He affected to be busily occupied in moving sundry articles on the tables and consoles, a-hemmed several times, in order that his master might become conscious of his presence, and, finding that no notice was taken of him, reminded his lordship that it was time to dress. Lord Alexander Beaulieu took the hint, but was in no humour to make inquiries relative to the gaieties in which his servant had been engaged, so began to prepare for performing the duties of the toilette.

"The Corso was very crowded to-day, my lord," observed Durnford.

"Was it?" said Lord Alexander, carelessly.

"Yes, my lord, very much so indeed. Such a number of persons! The ambassadors' carriages looked pretty well, but the Roman ones were quite a shame to be seen. They looked as old-fashioned and clumsy as if they were built when the city itself was. There were a few neat English carriages, to be sure, that did some credit to the country, but I can't say as how Mrs. Maclaurin's was among the number. That foreign courier of hers is a sad fellow, and very ignorant, as your lordship may suppose, when he persists in thinking that a sheriff's carriage, which he once saw in London,

was the finest turn-out he ever beheld, and so persuaded Mrs. Mac-laurin to have hers arranged as like it as possible. He's a great rogue into the bargain, and makes his thirty or forty per cent. on everything he orders for his mistress, which is a shame, when an honest English servant would be well satisfied with half that rate of per centage."

"But an honest servant, whether foreign or English, has no right to any per centage whatever," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"But when English servants see these foreigners making such large profits out of their masters, they'd think it very hard if they were not allowed a moderate one, and servants must live, my lord, which they can't do, if they are not to have their perquisites."

"Which mean nothing more nor less than imposition," replied Lord Alexander Beaulieu tartly.

Durnford saw that he had committed himself, and regretted his imprudence, which wishing to efface from his master's mind, he endeavoured adroitly to change the subject. "I hope Mrs. Mac-laurin has received no serious injury," resumed he, "for the poor lady was terribly pelted by the crowd. I'm sure I expected nothing less than that she would be dangerously hurt, but I must say she showed a wonderful spirit, for I never did see a lady—no, nor for the matter of that, a woman either—pitch into 'em with *bonbons*, as she did. There she was, using both arms, with her hands—and they are not small ones—filled with *bonbons*, throwing them as fast, and with as much force as she could, at the heads of all the people in the street. She half-blinded some, and hurt several, which made them so angry that they attacked her in downright earnest, pelting her with showers, not of real *bonbons*, but imitation ones, made of plaster of Paris, which hit her hard on the face, neck, and arms: but she gallantly stood her ground, and would to the last moment of her life, I'm persuaded, if the police had not interfered, and gone up to arrest her."

"The police!" exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with horror. "Good heavens! what a scandalous affair! And what had occurred to occasion such a measure?"

"Why, my lord, the crowd began throwing *bonbons* at Mrs. Mac-laurin, as they did at many other ladies. She resented it, and threw handfuls with great force at them. When they saw she was angry, they pelted her without any mercy, and, I fear, really hurt her. But, however that may be, she never gave in, and when they

noticed how red she got, and how vigorously she used her arms, they swore she was a man in disguise, and all assailed her. The police interfered, and having made the crowd forbear, all would have been well; but Mrs. Maclaurin began pelting at them afresh, and then the police went up to her balcony, and wanted to take her prisoner. She seemed to give them her mind pretty freely, for she put her arms a-kinbo, and snapped her fingers at them, and would certainly have been carried off, but that Mr. Strathern, who was on the adjoining balcony, interfered in her favour, and got the police to go away."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu listened to this statement in speechless dismay. That the woman he was about to wed should thus publicly expose herself filled him with shame and disgust; and that Strathern—the fastidious and dignified Strathern—should not only be a spectator of her exposure, but should have been the person to rescue her from the consequences of her unfeminine grossness, greatly added to his anger and humiliation. He guessed also, that where Strathern was, Mrs. and Miss Sydney were sure to be, and consequently, that these refined and decorous ladies should have witnessed the odious exhibition of the future Lady Alexander Beaulieu, almost maddened him. He bit his lip till the blood flowed from it, and his countenance revealed the rage that filled his heart, but he uttered no word; and Durnford, who expected that his master would express the anger his statement had excited, was disappointed when his lordship coolly told him he should not require his services for half an hour.

"Well, thought the artful *valet de chambre* when at liberty in his own room to indulge his cogitations, "people may say what they like, but the nobility are *not* like the rest of mankind. *If* they feel as other men do—and *I* have great doubts on this point—they certainly manage never to show it. Why, if any one was to come to me, and tell me about Justine what I have just told his lordship about the woman he is going to marry, I'd flare up like a house on fire, swear till I was black and blue, and call her every name I could put my tongue to, while he never says a word, but just turns very pale, looks fierce about the eyes, and shows, by the quick moving of the worked cambric over his chest, that all is not right in his breast; and, instead of easing his mind, as I should in his case do, by giving her a few hearty d——s, coolly tells me he will not require my services for half an hour. No, no, the nobility are not the same as other people, and so all who come

to live near enough to observe them closely must discover."

"How I loathe and abhor this abominable woman!" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, when he found himself alone, and his countenance was so expressive of the hatred he avowed, that it was fearful to behold it. "A man would be justified in committing any crime to get rid of such a creature," resumed he, and he clenched his hand, and struck the table with violence. "God help her, if she presumes to oppose my will when I have given her the right to my name! I feel that I could be guilty of any enormity, so strong is the hatred I bear her. Why, why do circumstances combine to force me into this odious marriage? The nearer it approaches, the stronger do I feel my dislike and disgust to her increase; and as if they were not already sufficiently deep, she must needs go and expose herself and me, as she did to-day. O, Destiny! cruel, implacable tyrant, why hast thou bestowed on me all the desires that should appertain only to the rich, and denied me the power to gratify them? Thou givest to the miser gold, which his penurious habits and frozen blood prevent him from feeling even the desire of expending in enjoyments; while to me, whose youthful blood rushes briskly through my veins, and whose desires are boundless as the ocean, thou refuseth even a portion of that wealth, piled in hidden heaps, which the sun never shines on, and which know only the touch of the griping miser, or the over-reaching usurer, through whose filching hands it passes to the prodigal, who stakes his grassy acres and waving woods to acquire it. And is there no road to fortune but through the temple of Hymen, desecrated by approaching it with that odious wretch? Alas! have I not vainly tried all others? Have I not sought the fickle goddess on the green turf with fleetest steeds? Have I not courted her smiles at the gaming-table, where I have seen heaps of gold swept away by those who wanted it not?—and have I not tried to wed where love might sanctify the wealth to be acquired, but failed to win the golden prize that might have kept me from evil? Alas! nothing remains but to marry this dreadful woman. My reason confirms the pleadings urged by my poverty. Why, then, cannot I conquer, even for a short time, the disgust she inspires, and still, if not the invincible hatred, at least the symptoms of which are ever ready to betray themselves, until her fortune is mine? I must have recourse to my old remedy for the blue devils, curacao, otherwise I shall be unequal to meet my Gorgon."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu rang the bell, the curaçoa was demanded, and two glasses of it having disappeared, his lordship dressed for dinner, and sought the *salon* of Mrs. Maclaurin. That lady had not yet left her dressing-room, but Mrs. Bernard was seated in a distant corner of the room, awaiting her arrival. She arose, with a look of great alarm, when Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered, and would have left the *salon*, had he not civilly requested that he might not disturb her. Her appearance was so different from that which she usually presented, that he stared at her in surprise, and well he might, for her face presented a most extraordinary mixture of colours, varying from red to blue, yellow, and black, the results of the repeated showers of plaster of Paris *bonbons*, which had been so mercilessly pelted at her patroness, but some of which had hit her.

“Bless me, Mrs. Bernard, what has happened to your face?” demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu. “It appears to be very much injured.”

“Yes, my lord, it is injured; but I hope with care that it will soon get better. With your lordship’s permission, I will go and inform Mrs. Maclaurin that you have arrived;” and before Lord Alexander Beaulieu had time to reply, Mrs. Bernard, with an air of great anxiety and dread, left the room. Mrs. Maclaurin soon after entered, and her face presented a most ludicrous appearance. Several large patches of sticking-plaster, much too large to be mistaken for beauty-spots, were stuck on different parts of her face, but they concealed not half the marks inflicted by the *bonbons* so rudely thrown at her, as sundry red spots proved. Her forehead had severely suffered in the conflict, and offered, by its variegated hues, a striking contrast to the bandeau of pure white Oriental pearls that crowned it. Her neck and bust, too, always red and freckled, bore evidence of the injuries they had sustained, and the splendid necklace of pearls that she wore made both appear to still greater disadvantage.

“You look amazed, my dear lord, and no wonder either, to see me in such a state,” said Mrs. Maclaurin, looking somewhat abashed. “I wish I had taken your advice, and not gone to the Cor-so. But who could have imagined that the Romans could ever be such brutes as to attack a lady, one of the fair sect? It really is too bad. People may talk of the Romans* in Ireland as much as they like—and, God knows, enough mischief is laid to their charge, and

* Roman Catholics.

to my certain knowledge much more than ever entered their heads—but they'd no more attack one of the fair sect than they'd fly, and, what's more, they'd soon settle any cowardly beasts that would dare to do so. No, the Irish Romans and the Romans here are quite different people, and so I'd like to tell the Pope, if I could see him."

"But what led to this attack on you?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu, finding it difficult to repress the smile her ignorance as well as her appearance excited.

"What led to it?" reiterated the lady. "Why *they* began it, the monsters. They pelted me until I was covered with chalk or cement, and bruised severely, and I determined to show 'em that I shouldn't give in, and so throw a stain on my country. I held out, and gave them as good as they brought, and was marked as you see me, for the honour of Ireland. There's many a pensioner at Greenwich Hospital that hasn't suffered more than I have done, or who was never in a hotter fire. I assure you, I can hardly move, and as to my arms, they are so tired from pelting them brutes, that I can't bend them. Ah, the beasts of the world! they had got the wrong sow by the ear, I could tell 'em, and so they found out at last, for my blood was up, and I'd have suffered death sooner than show a white feather, as they say in England. But the police interfered, and I thought, of course, that they'd be all for taking my part, seeing that I was one of the fair sect, and also a lady of fortune, which they must have at once discerned by my diamonds, and, believing this, I thought that, seeing the crowd was frightened into being quiet by the police, I'd just pay the beasts off a little for the bruises they gave me, when, would you believe it! I had no sooner thrown a few handfuls of *bonbons* with all my might and main at them, than the police came right up to my balcony, and wanted to take me prisoner, which I really believe they would have done, had not a very genteel elegant man, quite a first-rate gentleman, I assure you, come to my rescue. I saw him looking at me in a very particular sort of way before he spoke to the police. There now, don't be jealous, as I see by your long face you are going to be, for there's no occasion, as, though I invited my preserver to come and dine with me, he refused to come."

"You cannot, surely, be serious? You *could not* be so very indecorous as to invite an utter stranger to dinner?"

"Now, there's a good creature, don't be so touchy and jealous," and the lady sidled up to the mortified Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

and, affecting to be coquettish and playful, tapped him on the cheek with her coarse red fingers and looked archly in his face. The comical effect of her countenance, with all the patches of sticking-plaster and bruises that covered it, was irresistible; nor could her *soi-disant* admirer, albeit little inclined to laughter at that moment, forbear indulging in it.

“Ah! I see I have conquered,” said Mrs. Maclaurin. “In spite of all your jealousy and ill-humour, you could not hold out against my coaxing ways. ’Twas just the same with poor Mr. Maclaurin. Ah! *that was* a man! and though he was not a lord, he had the spirit of one. When I think how indulgent and generous he was to me, I grow quite melancholy, and that gives me such a sinking at the stomach that it makes me feel quite faint. I must ring for dinner. I have ordered some ox-tail soup from the English confectioner’s, and some of that, with a couple of glasses of good old madeira, will set me to rights. You don’t know how ill that stupid woman, Mrs. Bernard, behaved in my hour of trial. Instead of taking my part, and joining me in pelting the brutes who attacked me, she tried to hide herself behind me, and kept begging me all the time not to throw at them. Think what a mean-spirited, cowardly creature she must be! but I always had a bad opinion of her. She makes as much fuss because she got a few bruises and scratches in the fray, as if she were seriously injured, while I, who really bore the brunt of the attack, support it quite patiently. I think it would be only right for me to send the gentleman who saved me from the police a handsome present, and I was thinking of a diamond ring, with a couple of lines of my own making, as a suitable gift.”

“What an idea!” exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with undissembled displeasure. “You must by no means think of such a thing. Nothing would be more improper.”

“And why so, pray?” demanded Mrs. Maclaurin, angrily. “When a person renders me a service—and this gentleman did when I greatly stood in need of it—wouldn’t it be only proper and genteel to show him my gratitude? He’ll be sure to hear that I am rich, and able to afford making him a handsome present, in return for his kindness, and he’ll think me very mean and stingy if I don’t.”

“You must really be guided by me on this occasion, my charming friend,” replied Lord Alexander Beaulieu; “and be assured that your sending a gift to the gentleman in question would be very indecorous, and expose you to severe animadversions, which, as my future wife, would be very painful to my feelings.”

“Well, if you will have it so, I will follow your advice; but I really feel that some return ought to be made to the gentleman. There was a lady and her daughter with him, who behaved very impudently to me, but I gave her a bit of my mind, which she didn’t at all like.”

It instantly occurred to Lord Alexander Beaulieu that the two ladies thus referred to must be Mrs. and Miss Sydney, on whom Strathern was always in attendance; and yet both were so well-bred and reserved, that he could not account for their having had any altercation with the coarse and vulgar woman before him. The notion of their having witnessed her folly and ignorance, with the consequences both had entailed on her, filled him with vexation, the demonstration of which was so evident in his countenance that Mrs. Maclaurin remarked it, and said—

“Ah! I see you are angry with them women for being impertinent to me; but never you mind; be assured I paid them off, for I’m very well able to take my own part when once my blood is up, and I told them some disagreeable truths, which they won’t forget in a hurry, I’ll be bound.”

“What led to the altercation between these ladies and you, may I inquire?” demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

“Why, I just spoke a few words very civilly to the old one, wishing to be a little sociable, as she stood on the balcony touching mine, and—would you believe it?—she had the impudence to turn her back, and not answer me. You may easily guess I wouldn’t stand that quietly, for I knew I had more money than she had, as might easily be seen by the difference in our carriages, dress, and jewels, for she hadn’t a single ornament about her but a small, plain brooch fastening her collar; in fact, she was shabby, so I gave her a lesson that will do her good. Her daughter then showed her airs, looked impertinently at me, and advised her mother not to speak to me, so I gave her my mind, too.”

Lord Alexander Beaulieu felt so angry, that he almost wished Strathern had not rescued the termagant from the police; while she, believing that his wrath was excited by the insults offered to her, looked tenderly in his face, patted his cheek, and declared he was a dear, darling man.

“What must Mrs. Sydney and her daughter think of this woman?” thought he, “and of me, when they hear that I have married her? I must however, wed her as soon as possible, in

order to have the right of preventing her from exposing herself still more."

"I forgot to tell you," resumed Mrs. Maclaurin, "that the woman who affronted me was the same person who was dressed as Queen Elizabeth at the ball cost-chew-me, and as she spoke to me there civilly enough, and asked me ever so many questions, I thought I had as good a right to speak to her then."

As Lord Alexander Beaulieu knew that this must be Lady Wellerby, he was much less annoyed than when he imagined it was Mrs. Sydney that Mrs. Maclaurin had attacked; for, strange to say, though urged by disappointment at having his addresses to her daughter and to herself rejected, to inflict any injury in his power on them, he shrunk from the notion of their coming in rude contact with her who was to be his wife, knowing that their knowledge of her must necessarily impress them with the worst opinion of him who could marry such a person.

"You are in a brown study, my lord," said Mrs. Maclaurin; "a penny for your thoughts. Come, now, tell me what you were thinking about?"

"My thoughts were precious, fair lady, for you occupied them. I was reflecting on the necessity of our setting out for Naples as soon as possible, so I hope you will hold yourself in readiness to leave Rome the day after to-morrow."

"Well, if you insist upon it; but really, I'm so shy"—and here the lady made a very clumsy attempt to enact the *rôle* of a bashful *fiancée*--"that the nearer the day draws nigh for our marriage the more timid do I feel."

"You must conquer this shyness, though it is infinitely becoming to you, I must acknowledge," observed her *soi-disant* lover, raising her hand to his lips. "You forget that you have once before approached the hymeneal altar."

"Indeed! and small blame to me if I forget it. Sure it was a very different marriage to what ours will be. Poor Mr. Maclaurin, though as good a man as ever was born, was too old to fall in love, as you have done. *He* only married me for my voice, whereas *you* chose me for myself; and you are not only a lord, but a fine handsome young one into the bargain. Oh! it's quite another guess matter. But what can be the reason dinner isn't served? I'm half dead with hunger, and the stupid people here always keep me waiting, every day, and that puts me in a passion, which spoils

my digestion. I often think what's the good of being rich, if one can't have everything the moment one wants it? But here it comes at last, after been kept waiting an hour since it was ordered to be served."

CHAPTER XXXI.

When jealous pangs fond hearts invade,
They summon pride unto their aid.
And it can outward calm impart,
While inly bleeds the tortured heart;
Can smoothe the brow, and check the tear,
While yet the lov'd one lingers near.
But ah! how soon pride's reign is o'er
When the beloved is seen no more!
Then gush the tears that had *he* seen,
Perhaps no cause for tears had been,
And pride no longer can sustain
The wounded heart that writhes in pain.

When Louisa Sydney awoke from her agitated slumbers, the morning after she had seen Strathern at the Coliseum, she felt for the first few minutes a vague sense of pain and sorrow, similar to that experienced when one is first aroused from an afflicting dream. Had she indeed been dreaming? was the first question that presented itself to her mind, but too soon came the sad recollection of what she had seen and heard the previous night—the tender attention with which Strathern bent down to listen to the low accents of his lovely companion, and the earnestness with which he replied to her—and tears, bitter tears, chased each other down her cheeks. Beautiful as the lady she had seen walking with him really was, Louisa Sydney, in the self-torturing spirit of jealousy exaggerated her charms, and drew the most disparaging comparisons between them and her own—in the excess of her humility, almost finding an excuse for the infidelity of her lover in the superior attractions of her rival.

But his deception and hypocrisy she could find no excuse for. This shocked and pained her, for it destroyed her respect for him. She had not only passionately, fondly, loved Strathern, but had entertained for him a sincere esteem, the only sure basis for a lasting affection. Now, all this fair edifice of love was shattered

to the ground, and its overthrow had so severely injured the heart where it was built, that she felt she should never more experience the happiness so lately her own. Henceforth in whom could she confide, when *he* who seemed the very soul of truth and honour could thus deceive? And were all the vows of love, the interchange of thoughts, that had served to bind them so closely and fondly to each other, nothing more—on his side, at least—than a part of that system of deception practised to win fortune of the heiress, that he might lavish it on the real object of his attachment? “Ah! who would be rich?” thought the weeping girl, as she writhed in agony over the destruction of her cherished hopes, and opened her mind to the cruel suspicions forced on her by the detection of her lover’s falsehood. “Were I poor, he would not have sought me, and I should not now have to mourn over the ruin of my happiness.”

Mrs. Sydney found her daughter pale and suffering; but Louisa had now schooled herself to conceal, if not to conquer, the violence of her grief, and her mother was gratified at observing the calmness of her demeanour, until, after a closer examination, she saw how much the effort cost her daughter.

“Mother,” said the agonized girl, “I have reflected much and deeply on the painful position in which I at this moment stand, and, to escape future regret, I have determined on once more seeing Strathern. It is due to him; and, whatever the result of our interview may be, I shall hereafter feel more satisfied that I did not deny him an opportunity for explanation, if, indeed, an honourable one can be found.”

“My precious child, I don’t wish to curb your inclination on this point, but *indeed*, Louisa, I fear an interview, under existing circumstances, will only serve to inflict additional pain on you.”

“Then you no longer think, mother, that he can be guiltless?” and the blush that rose to the cheek of Louisa, previously pale as Parian marble, betrayed the deep emotion occasioned by this proof that her mother did not now offer any plea in favour of her lover. “You are silent, mother, but too well do I know how to interpret that silence. It convinces me that you, like me, are assured that the person we saw him with last night is not such a one as my affianced husband should be seen with.”

“But what object do you propose to yourself, my child, by this interview?” said Mrs. Sydney, evading to notice her daughter’s interpretation of her silence.

“ My project, mother, is to force myself to assume as calm an aspect as I can—my pride will, I trust, enable me to conceal my feelings—and receive him as much in the usual way as will be possible with my altered sentiments, and thus give him an opportunity of explaining who the person is with whom we saw him.”

“ Alas! my child, I fear it is a subject on which he could not touch with you or me. A night’s calm reflection has brought me to think that there is, there *must* be, something very wrong in what we last night witnessed. No prudent woman would be seen alone with any man who was not her husband or brother at such an hour, and in so lonely a place. We are acquainted with every one in good society here, but the face we then beheld was that of a total stranger.”

Louisa Sydney slightly shuddered, and became of a deathlike paleness. She pressed her hands to her heart, as if to still its beatings, and presented such a picture of woe, that her mother could no longer repress her tears.

“ You weep, dearest mother, and for me! you who have had long years of so much sorrow; ” and extending her arms towards her parent, who pressed her daughter to her breast, they for some time mingled their tears together. No attempt at consolation could have been half so efficacious as the deep sympathy of her mother, thus so unequivocally expressed, and Louisa Sydney felt that never until the last few hours had she really known how to estimate the maternal heart, with its inexhaustible store of tenderness and commiseration, which now, in her hour of need, sent gushing forth its waters of balm, to soothe and heal the wounds of her lacerated heart. When relieved by tears, Louisa again expressed her desire to see Strathern once more.

“ It may be a weakness, dear mother, but I pray you to bear with me, when I urge this wish of mine against your opinion. I want to judge for myself how he will look and act when we meet, and whether it will be possible for him to assume his usual tenderness of manner and fond devotion after what we have seen. If he *can*, why then I think I may bring myself, as I ought, to rejoice in my deliverance from such a husband.”

But, alas! the changeful colour and trembling lips of the agitated girl but too well betrayed that, whatever might be the result of the purposed interview, the time was yet far, far distant, when, however her reason might approve it, her rapture with her lover could become a source of satisfaction to her. Even firmer minds than

Louisa Sydney's might be pardoned for the feverish anxiety that now filled hers in the trying position in which she found herself placed. Strathern had been so truly loved, had filled her heart and her thoughts so wholly during the last few months, had so entirely occupied the present and mingled with every plan, every hope of the future, that she could not tear his image from her breast without almost breaking the heart with whose very fibres it was entwined. To think of him of whom she had made an idol, now degraded and worthless, was torture, was agony. The present was insupportable, and the future she dared not contemplate. Forgetful of the precepts of religion, that only true consolation in all earthly trials, she prayed for death, thoughtless of how unfit she was, with a heart filled with love for man, to meet the presence of her divine Creator. Mrs. Sydney, unwilling to give pain by opposing, at length yielded to the wish of her daughter. Louisa arose from her bed, but such had been the effect of sorrow and disappointed affection on her delicate frame that it was long before she could get through the duties of her toilet. When Nurse Murray presented one of the favourite robes of Strathern, and the ribbons lately selected by her youthful mistress in compliance with his taste, a burst of fresh tears streamed down the cheeks of Louisa as she waved her hand to have them put aside.

"Give me a black silk dress," said she, feeling that it would be a mockery to attire her person in gay colours, while all within was dark and cheerless; and Mrs. Sydney, who well understood what was passing in her daughter's mind, remembered how she, too, long after the prescribed time for wearing black had expired, turned with distaste from the coloured dresses presented for her use by officious friends. Not so did Nurse Murray feel. "Oh! what a pity it is," thought she, "that my darling young lady will put on that gloomy black? It never was becoming to her, even when she was well; but now, when she looks as pale as a ghost, and has the tears springing into her eyes every minute, it will make her look plain, if any dress could have that effect. Besides, I can't bear that *he* should have the satisfaction of seeing her looking ill. It will be just for all the world like saying 'see how miserable you have made me;' and no woman, be she the highest or the poorest, should ever let any man, not even the best of them, know that he has such a power over her. I know the sect. They are all alike, and never to be trusted with power. If God made us the weaker vessels, as we are called, hasn't *He* given us cunning to keep the strong in

order? For what else have we our tongues, of which the stoutest men are afraid, and our tears, which the rudest cannot withstand? Wouldn't the horse master his rider, if he only knew his own strength and the other's weakness? but the rider conceals both, and masters the poor animal, by never letting him know his own power. This is what we women should do. We ought never to let the men know how weak, how fond we can be, but, like the rider with the horse, make 'em believe we are strong and powerful."

Nurse Murray would have given expression to her thoughts had she been alone with her young lady, even at the risk of displeasing her, so firmly was she persuaded of the wisdom of her own opinion on the momentous subject in question: but the presence of Mrs. Sydney, of whom she stood in a certain degree of awe, imposed silence on her, so her youthful mistress missed the opportunity of hearing her sentiments, all of which were founded on her own experience in matrimonial life, and on the yielding disposition of her meek-hearted helpmate, over whom her self-will and power of rhetoric had achieved an easy conquest.

"No," resumed Murray, "*I* would have put on my most becoming dress and gayest ribands, and, so far from letting him see that he had power of grieving me, I would have pretended—ay, even though my heart was breaking, that I would—to be in the highest spirits imaginable, until I had brought him to submission. Ah! well a-day, what a pity it is that women should ever grow old, and so lose the power of tormenting! Perhaps, after all, it is as well my poor husband was removed from this life before I had lost my empire over him, which, probably, when he had seen me grow old, would have been the case, and I never could have borne to see him set up to have a way of his own. No! that would have broken my heart outright, while now I have the comfort of reflecting that up to his last hour I never allowed him to think or act for himself, and this is a great consolation."

While these cogitations were passing in the mind of Nurse Murray, her hands were occupied in dressing her young mistress, who, totally passive under her operations, with eyes averted from her mirror, longed to be released from the irksome task of adornment, now that she no longer sought to please. It was but the previous day that she had felt a pleasure in that which at present fatigued and annoyed her. How well she remembered every trivial incident connected with the toilet of the preceding morning! How she had half-offended Nurse Murray by declining to wear the

robe she had prepared for her, because it was the one which Strathern the least liked! How glad she had felt when her mirror had assured her that her dress was peculiarly becoming—not from vanity, for Louisa Sydney was not a vain woman, but simply because she knew that it would give pleasure to her lover to see her looking well! And now she no longer had an object to induce attention to her dress, no longer a desire to appear to advantage in *his* eyes, whom alone she had hitherto wished to please. However *recherché* or becoming her attire might be, how could *she* hope to compete in personal attraction with the lovely woman whom she had beheld him with the night before! No! all was now over. Henceforth she would abandon herself to the dreary fate which his infidelity and falsehood had prepared for her, and await, as best she might, the death which, she doubted not, must, sooner or later, follow sufferings like those endured since the previous night.

Poor Louisa! she had yet much to learn in the science of affliction—that science, the first rudiments of which she had but so lately begun to acquire, and whose lessons require a patience which time alone can bestow. She had yet to know that death comes not when prayed for; or else how few among the young, who, shrinking under the first disappointment of the heart, implore it, would ever arrive at maturity! When such a disappointment first falls on the young heart, palsying its finest and most generous impulses, an all-engrossing selfishness it apt to replace the nobler qualities that had previously characterised it, and it is not until sorrow has sufficiently tried it that it resumes its former purity. This was now the case with Louisa Sydney. Alive only to the bitterness of her own grief, she forgot, in her desire to escape from it by the death which she invoked, how desolate, if deprived of her only child, her sole consolation on earth, would that fond mother's lot be who now lived but for her.

Supported on the arm of Mrs. Sydney, her daughter, tremulous with emotion, entered the saloon, and took her usual place there. Every sound agitated her, and the symptoms of her agitation were so evident, *malgré* all her efforts to conceal them, that her mother once more entreated her to abandon her project of seeing Strathern, and let *her* receive him: but Louisa was not to be persuaded; and while her mother was yet urging her, Strathern's well-known step was heard in the ante-room, and in the next moment he entered the apartment. His step was buoyant, and there was a joyousness in his aspect and in the very sound of his voice, as he approached

and uttered the customary salutations, little in unison with the feelings of those he addressed. Notwithstanding that both Mrs. Sydney and Louisa endeavoured to appear as usual, there was a gravity, if not a sadness, in their countenances and manner that instantly struck Strathern, and subdued his cheerfulness.

"Has anything occurred — have either of you been ill?" demanded he with evident anxiety, looking from one to the other. "Yes, you, dearest, I now see have been suffering;" and he again took Louisa's trembling hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"I have not been quite well," said she, "but it was nothing serious, a mere slight and temporary indisposition."

"I wished so much to get to you last night, but found, to my annoyance, that it was impossible. There was no means of escaping from my friend, until it was too late to present myself here."

Louisa felt the blood mount to her cheek at this statement, which she received as an irrefragable proof of the hypocrisy and unworthiness of her lover; and Mrs. Sydney, calm and patient as she was in general, experienced a sentiment of indignation she found it difficult to repress. Strathern, who observed Louisa's blush, attributed it to anger at his not having come to her the preceding night, and felt vexed at her still continuing to betray her displeasure.

"Then you remained with your friend the whole evening," observed Louisa.

"Yes; after dinner I accompanied him, it being a fine moonlight night, in a drive around Rome, where he has never previously been, in order that he might see the exterior, at least, of some of the objects that he most wished to behold. He is quite unable to walk, and so infirm, that I fear there is but little chance of his ever recovering.

This statement, delivered without the slightest symptom of embarrassment on the part of the speaker, conveyed such a conviction to his hearers, that dissimulation and falsehood were habitual to him, that both felt their disgust and anger considerably increased. One of those dead pauses ensued, so disagreeable when the individuals composing a small circle are under a constraint, and yet wish to avoid betraying their consciousness of it. Strathern turned to Mrs. Sydney, whose general equanimity and peculiar kindness to himself he had so often experienced, as if to seek a solution of the cause of the incomprehensible change in the manner of his affianced wife, but a gravity almost amounting to sternness, never previously

observable in the countenance of that lady, checked the inquiry that hovered on his lips, and increased the painful sense of embarrassment that stole over him. With some effort, he again essayed to break the spell of silence, and hazarded some common-place remark on the weather, that never-failing resource of an Englishman to keep up a flagging conversation, or renew a dropped one. But this experiment was unsuccessful, for it drew only a monosyllable from one of the ladies.

Strathern felt his displeasure growing into real anger, as he sat eyeing alternately mother and daughter, and endeavoured to find a cause for their inexplicable coldness and reserve. Was his having devoted one evening to an old and dear friend to be punished as if he had committed some deep offence? and was Mrs. Sydney, instead of using her exertions to make her daughter sensible of the unreasonableness of her displeasure for such a trivial cause, to evince herself an equal degree of dissatisfaction? If so, then had he but little chance of happiness in his proposed union with her daughter; and his marriage with the beloved object of his affection, hitherto looked forward to with joyful anticipation, as the crowning of his felicity, would be but the commencement of a life of despotism on her part, and contemptible submission, or open rebellion on his. No, such a prospect was too dreadful to contemplate! He must come to an explanation with Louisa, must establish an understanding that would restore the happy future with her which he had previously expected, or—he must break with her for ever. And yet, angry as he was, he dared not reflect on the possibility of losing her, without a pang, that made him sensible how closely interwoven her image was with his hopes of happiness—nay, with his very existence itself. He trembled lest, in his present state of irritation, he might be hurried into the expression of his feelings, and give utterance to aught that might widen the unaccountable breach between them; so he determined on withdrawing, and remaining absent a few hours until his mind had recovered its calmness.

He arose, pleaded an engagement, and approached to take the hand of Louisa. It was accorded to him with an air of such freezing coldness, that he scarcely retained it a moment in his, yet he still lingered in the room, expecting the usual invitation to dinner. It, however, came not, nor when he was leaving the room was a single word said by either mother or daughter that indicated a desire or an expectation of seeing him again that day. What did, what

could all this strange conduct mean? He could not form even a suspicion, unless it originated in his not having returned to spend the previous evening with Louisa, as she had expressed her wish that he should. And yet the punishment was so very much disproportioned to the offence—if, indeed, offence it could be really termed—that he could not reconcile it to his knowledge of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter's character that they should thus act.

He left the house in a state of great agitation, and was proceeding to his hotel, when, nearly at its door, he met the carriage of Lord Delmington, with its owners in it. He would have retreated from them, so unfit did he feel at that moment for holding intercourse with even his most esteemed friend; but, unfortunately, Lord Delmington caught sight of him, and, stopping the carriage, said, "We were just going to your hotel in search of you, my dear Strathern, for I want you to take Mary into St. Peter's, as I cannot have the pleasure of doing so myself. Come into the carriage."

Strathern paused, and gladly would have made some excuse for not complying with his friend's request; but Lord Delmington, with the impatience that often accompanies ill-health, exclaimed, "Come, Strathern, don't stand waiting;" and mechanically, the step being let down by the servant, Strathern entered the carriage.

"I fear we have interrupted you when you have some other engagement," said the beautiful woman who was seated by Lord Delmington, and who, with all a woman's tact, perceived in an instant that Strathern would have preferred not accompanying them.

"No great matter if we even do make him break an engagement for once," observed Lord Delmington; "for, as we positively go away to Naples to-morrow, he will be soon quit of the trouble of lionizing us."

Strathern said something civil about his having pleasure in being of use to Lady Delmington, though wishing himself a hundred miles off while he uttered the words, and they proceeded to St. Peter's. Half a dozen carriages were drawn up in front of the church as the one he was seated in approached; and he, having cast a hurried glance of inquiry, to ascertain whether they belonged to any of his acquaintances, was glad to find they did not, for he was unwilling to be seen alone with a strange lady, and, above all, on whose beauty was so remarkable as to attract all eyes, and yet

whose position was so equivocal as the one with whom he was about to enter St. Peter's.

"I will drive up and down," said Lord Delmington, "while you take Mary round the church. You need not hurry yourself, dearest," resumed he, addressing himself to his fair companion, who was unwilling to leave him, "for, as I am not able to enter this glorious temple, it will be a pleasure to me that you should see it."

Strathern gave his arm to Lady Delmington to ascend, and, having lifted the heavy curtain that drapes the entrance, he found himself, when on the inner side of it, *vis-à-vis* to Mr. Rhymer, and so close that there was no avoiding him. The eyes of the old man became riveted on the beautiful face of the lady, which never could have appeared to greater advantage than at that moment, when lighted up by the enthusiastic admiration which the first sight of that wondrous fane excited.

"Ah! you here," observed Rhymer, extending his hand to Strathern, "and, as I see, leading an angel to the shrine of a saint."

Lady Delmington blushed at this florid compliment, and her heightened colour rendered her still handsomer.

"You are indeed a fortunate man," resumed Rhymer, "for you seem to exist in an atmosphere of beauty. I never see you that you are not escorting some one of earth's fairest daughters. May I claim the privilege of an old man, and ask to be presented to your lovely companion?"

Strathern felt the blood rise to his cheek, and the consciousness that his confusion and embarrassment were visible to Rhymer, whose eyes were fixed with a searching earnestness on his face, increased both. "Another time, perhaps," muttered he, moving abruptly away with the lady, and leaving Rhymer standing as if rooted to the spot.

"How very disagreeable!" said Lady Delmington, in her sweetest accents; "I saw you were embarrassed; but who could have imagined that we should have met any one who would thus, *sans cérémonie*, ask to be presented to me? Who is that old man?"

"He is no other than Rhymer, the poet."

"What! the author of some of my most favourite poems? I am sorry I did not know him. Oh! Mr. Strathern, what a temple, and how instinct with grandeur and beauty! What would I not give

that my dear Francis were here to behold it! Every sight loses half its attraction for me when he cannot share the delight of seeing it with me."

Though in no mood to be pleased with anything at that moment, Strathern could not resist feeling the charm spread around her by the young and artless being by whose side he walked through that glorious fane, as, rapt in the contemplation of its countless beauties, and the sublimity of the whole, she now moved silently along, seemingly forgetful of his presence. At length she awoke as from a dream, and said, "Now let us go to Francis. How selfish of me to have stayed from him so long!"

To account for the embarrassment in which Strathern found himself placed with regard to avowing at once to Louisa Sydney the new female acquaintance he had formed, and the visit with her the preceding night to the Coliseum, we must inform our readers that when he went to the hotel to dine with Lord Delmington, he was never more surprised than on being presented to a young and lovely woman as his lordship's wife. The tale Lord Delmington had to tell was a brief one. He had fallen in love with the only daughter of his tutor, a clergyman with whom his father had placed him after he had left college. The moment the conscientious Mr. Ravensfield had discovered the attachment, he revealed it to the Marquis of Roehampton, who instantly summoned his son to the paternal home, when, having reproached him with a severity little calculated to work the desired effect, he prohibited him, under pain of his eternal displeasure, ever again to hold intercourse with the object of his affection, whom he designated as an artful and designing girl, while he stigmatised her worthy father as a hypocrite, who hoped to win his consent to the ennobling his low-born daughter by an affected show of honour in revealing the attachment of his degenerate son.

The health of Lord Delmington, always delicate, sank beneath his separation from the innocent and lovely Mary Ravensfield, and the harshness of his father. The Marquis of Roehampton, alarmed by his danger, consented to his son's adopting the advice of the physicians consulted, and proceeding forthwith to Italy. Lord Delmington found means, ill as he was, to evade the watchful care of his stern parent. He hurried to the parsonage, to take leave of his adored Mary, and to renew his vows of unalterable and devoted love. He found it empty. The worthy clergyman had died a few days before, leaving his orphan child nearly portionless, and de-

pendant for a home on the kindness of an elderly maiden lady of limited means, who resided in the neighbourhood, and who had taken a deep interest in her since the death of her mother. Lord Delmington's resolution was instantly taken. He determined to wed his dear Mary at once, and to make her the companion of his visit to Italy. His impassioned pleadings won the consent of the lovely girl and her protectress, who, aware of the insulting letters written by the Marquis of Rochampton to Mr. Ravensfield—letters that she firmly believed had greatly accelerated his death, felt a pleasure in thinking that the orphan would, in spite of the harsh and unjust marquis, be elevated to a station from which he could not dispossess her. The marriage was celebrated in her presence and that of two other chosen friends of the late rector, and it was agreed that it should not be declared until the youthful pair were beyond the reach of the stern father's anger, which his son's precarious state of health rendered him unfit to cope with. Lord Delmington made Strathern promise not to reveal his marriage until the disclosure had first been made to his father, which he meant should be in a short time.

The seclusion in which the Marquis of Rochampton had immured his only son had tended to keep him in a state of ignorance with regard to a knowledge of the world and its conventional usages, seldom to be found in a man of high birth who had reached the age of twenty-three. Little, therefore, did Lord Delmington imagine that, by concealing his marriage, he was exposing the fair fame of the object dearest to him in life to the most injurious suspicions; and that, as the companion of his travels, Mary, the pure-minded, innocent Mary, was supposed to have no legitimate right to his protection.

When dinner was over, he proposed that Strathern should accompany him and his wife in a *giro*, which his friend could not well refuse; and when they drove to the Coliseum, he asked Strathern to conduct her to the interior of it. The conversation overheard by Louisa bore reference to the promise of secrecy relative to the marriage exacted by Lord Delmington, and which his wife was as anxious as himself should be kept until her husband's health was sufficiently improved to enable him to bear up against the first burst of his father's wrath on hearing of it. Strathern had urged his friend no longer to delay writing to his father, or to expose Lady Delmington to animadversion, and thus was he unwillingly involved in a false position without any fault of his own.

CHAPTER XXXII.

If wealth can many blessings grant
Unknown to those who pine in want,
It also can some ills bestow
That poverty can never know :
The sated appetite, the spleen,
The tedious hours that intervene
'Twixt pleasures that amuse no more
When once their novelty is o'er,
The parasites, *soi-disant* friends,
Intent to gain their private ends—
From these exempt, O Poverty !
Whate'er thine ills, thou still art free.

It is long since we parted with Lord Fitzwarren and his travelling companion, Webworth, who pursued their route, perfectly regardless of the objects on it that attract other tourists, the first, thinking only of the defective breed of horses he noticed at the post-houses as compared with those of England ; and the second commenting on the luncheons and dinners furnished to him at the different inns. Modern travellers find a pleasure in tracing the journey of Horace to Brundisium, and smack their lips when thinking of the Falernian wine he partook of on his way ; but our travellers would not have been satisfied with such simple fare as that noted by the Roman poet, and the diary kept by Webworth would have proved the progress made in the *science de bouche* in the nineteenth century, so elaborate were the “pencillings by the way” jotted down by that epicurean of the best *plats* to be had at the different *albergas*. Arrived at Venice, the surprise of Lord Fitzwarren could only be equalled by his anger, when he discovered that there were no horses there, and that gondolas served in the place of carriages. “What a vile city !” said he. “I am glad it is going to ruin, for who but fools could have built one where horses could not be ?”

Strange to say, he had never read any account of this sea-born capital, and was, consequently, in perfect ignorance of its peculiarities. “Our stay here shall be brief,” resumed he, “for I shan’t be caught spending many hours in a place where no horses are to be seen.”

A *laquais de place*, who understood a little English, happening to overhear this remark, as Lord Fitzwarren stood at the door of the Leone Bianco, came forward, and assured my lord that, if he would condescend to put himself under his guidance, he would lead him to see the finest horses in the world.

“Lead on, then, my hearty, and the sooner the better, for I long for the sight of one of my favourite animals, as a fish does for water.”

But when they arrived at the Piazza de San Marco, and the celebrated bronze horses there were pointed out to him, he laughed the *laquais de place* to scorn, and declared it was an imposition to stick up horses as a sign, when no living ones could be had in the place. Nay, more, he pronounced the long admired work of Lysippus to be a poor thing, asserting that the animals showed no blood, and were clumsy brutes. In vain did the voluble Venetian relate the fame and travels of these steeds, always the meed of victors from the remote epoch, when Augustus, after the defeat of Antony, removed them from Alexandria to Rome, down to their *enlèvement* by the modern Cæsar, the Emperor Napoleon, who considered them among his proudest trophies.

“And more fool he!” replied Lord Fitzwarren. “He might have had a score of the finest living, thorough-bred English horses, for half the money which the removal of yonder bronze ones must have cost; and had he been a good judge of horse-flesh, he would not have looked twice at these.”

The *laquais de place* shrugged his shoulders, and offered to conduct milor to some of the palaces to see the pictures.

“You may spare yourself the trouble; I have had quite enough of looking at pictures at Rome, and don’t mean to bore myself with any more.”

“But Titiano, the great Titiano! surely milor would not leave Venice without beholding the *chefs-d’œuvre* of his pencil?”

“I will though, for hang me if I look at a picture until I get back to England, and see Edwin Landseer’s horses and dogs, that are better worth attention than all your Italian pictures put together.”

Returned to the Leone Bianco, Lord Fitzwarren found his friend Webworth selecting from a printed bill of fare before him the dainties he preferred, and noting them down for the cook. “This is such an abominable place, Weby, that it is impossible to stay here,” said he.

[We will spare our readers the half intelligible pronunciation of

Mr. Webworth, and indite his words without the tiresome lisp that invariably accompanied them.]

“You don’t mean that, my good fellow. Why, you remember Burford told us, that the best *chef de cuisine* in all Italy is to be found at this very hotel, and what the deuce else can you want to make us comfortable?”

“Many things, horses among the rest. How the devil can a man be happy in a place where there is not a horse? No, I really can’t make up my mind to stay here a week as we intended—nay, for the matter of that, I should like to go off to-morrow.”

“But remember, my dear Fitz, people would laugh so confoundedly at us, were we to leave Venice without seeing its churches, palaces, and fine pictures.”

“You don’t mean to say that *you* would give a fig, Weby, to see them?”

“I certainly would not have come out of my way to view them, I confess, Fitz, but as we *are* here I should like to be able to say I had seen them.”

“Oh! for the matter of that, Weby, you can *say* you have, and that will do just as well. For my part, I think it will look very knowing when people are talking of Venice, and boring one, as they always do, about pictures and other things to say I was at Venice, but made it a point not to see any of those things, I was so tired of hearing them talked of. That will make ’em stare twice as much as if one prated about the matter for an hour.”

“But really, Fitz, I should like to stretch my legs a little after being so long shut up in a postchaise. And though I don’t care much about palaces, churches, and pictures, the going to see them makes one take exercise, and that gives a good appetite, which, as the *chef de cuisine* here is a prime artist, is worth having.”

“You would not surely like to go about in one of those black hearses that they call gondolas, Weby? I thought I should be suffocated while I was going to the Place St. Mark, and it put such melancholy thoughts into my head that I haven’t got over it yet.”

“You won’t mind it after a little use, Fitz; so, there’s a good fellow, let us stay here a few days, and try the cook’s skill. Venice is famed for a certain breakfast-cake called *focaccio*. I wrote it down in my pocket-book when I heard Burford speak of it, and it would be a pity not to make acquaintance with it.”

"Well, as you have set your heart on it, Weby, I will stay three or four days here; but it's against my will, I can tell you."

Mr. Webworth endeavoured to induce Lord Fitzwarren to break through his original resolution, and accompany him the regular round of sight-seeing; for the excellence of the cook at the Leone Bianco made so favourable an impression on his mind that he would willingly have prolonged his sojourn there *ad infinitum*, could he have persuaded his friend to remain.

"What you can see in Venice to make you wish to stay here, I cannot imagine," said Lord Fitzwarren, his temper somewhat tried by the pertinacity with which Webworth continued to urge him to postpone his departure.

"Why, where can we hope to find such a cook, Fitz? And after our bad fare on the road, and indifferent dinners at Rome, it is a comfort to enjoy the living here."

"That fellow Weby thinks of nothing, lives for nothing, but his stomach," thought Lord Fitzwarren, annoyed at the total disregard to his own wishes betrayed by his epicurean companion; while Webworth, when left alone, could not forbear thinking "What a devilish selfish dog Fitzwarren was, who, because *he* did not like Venice, must needs hurry away from it long before he wished to go."

"Mem," thought Webworth; "if ever I, by any unexpected and lucky chance, should inherit a fortune, I will take especial care never to charge myself with a *compagnon de voyage*. It is the greatest mistake in the world; for one is sure to find it a regular bore. Poor Fitz, though a good sort of fellow in his way, is a terrible *bête*, I must admit. Witness his desire to leave such a cook as we have here. No; *I'll* never invite a friend to travel with me: I have had too much experience of the folly of that. Now, there's Fitz, who always begins to talk when I wish to doze, and interrupts my digestion: then, too, he sometimes touches me in the carriage; and I hate being touched: wants to have the glass up when I wish it down, and *vice versa*. No; I'll keep my postchaise to myself, if ever I should become master of one, and carefully eschew bores; poor Fitzwarren has given me a sickener of them."

Though previously determined not to go and see any of the sights at Venice, Lord Fitzwarren found the time hang so heavily on his hands, that, in order to get rid of it, he at last consented to accompany his friend the usual round of palaces and churches, protesting.

all the time, and with perfect truth, that he felt not the least pleasure in doing so. The past history of Venice was as a blank to him: its fading splendour a matter of indifference. Its proud names could awaken no associations in *his* unlettered mind, and the treasures of art it contains he was incapable of appreciating. His companion, nearly equally ignorant, was quite as indifferent about art: but, calculating that even the superficial knowledge of pictures and places to be acquired by viewing them once or twice might furnish him with new topics of conversation, and so induce invitations to country houses in England, on his return, he determined on not neglecting this opportunity of increasing his claims to the hospitality of those numerous hosts in his own country who find it difficult, from the proverbial dulness of their houses, to secure guests to eat their good dinners, drink their old wines, and listen to their thrice-told long stories. To such hosts Webworth was a sure card—"A well-bred, inoffensive man," as they termed him—who would neither tempt their wives into flirtations, nor their daughters into an imprudent love-match. He was also very popular with the ladies of these country-houses: for, too silent to be addicted to gossiping, they might, with perfect impunity, indulge in sentimental conversations with any favoured beau, in his presence, without his appearing conscious of it, while he afforded a cover from the open indecorum of a *tête-à-tête*. "It was only Webworth," was a frequent remark uttered by them, when some new adorer, unacquainted with his peculiar merits, stopped short in the midst of a whispered declaration of *tendresse*, on his entering a room; and the younger ladies of families were all amiability to him, because he never prated of who rode by their sides, when out of sight of papa and mamma, or seemed to notice the giving or taking a flower. In fact, Webworth was never *de trop*, for he could fall into a doze whenever he wished it, keep awake during the longest game of chess, or patience, with his hosts, praise their venison, and espouse their political prejudices. No wonder, then, that he was popular.

The *laquais de place* who conducted Lord Fitzwarren and his friend around Venice was at his wits' end, as he declared to the gondoliers, to know what sight could please milord.

"Ah! these Inglesé (would he say, have too much money to be happy. They take pleasure in nothing, Giacomo. Would you believe it?—this milor will hardly look at our finest pictures, and turns away from our most noble palaces and churches. When I took them to the Frari, to show them the splendid tomb of the Doge

Foscari, milor said *he* cared not for all our doges put together; and, when I pointed out the stone that covers the resting-place of our greatest painter, and read aloud—

“ ‘ Qui giace il gran Tiziano,’

which I never pronounce without feeling proud, he told me not to speak any of my Italian lingo to him, for he didn't understand a word of it.”

“ All the Inglesé do not resemble this milor,” observed the gondolier. “ I have had many of them in this very gondola who knew all about Venice as well—ay, and better too—than any *cicerone* in the place, and who would go from palace to palace, and church to church, to see particular spots where remarkable events had occurred.”

“ The *laquais de place* tells me that we have now seen everything worth looking at in Venice,” said Lord Fitzwarren to his companion, as they sat at a late breakfast in the bay-window in the Leone Bianco that overhangs the canal, “ and a pretty jumble they have made in my head; I can't remember one single thing distinctly, but all is a confused mass mixed up together in my brain; and no wonder, when I have been looking at things I never before heard or dreamt of, and don't care a farthing about. I have been quite out of my latitude ever since I set foot in Italy—that's the truth of it—and I heartily wish I had never left old England, the only country in the world for man or beast. When a fellow don't know what to do with himself, Weby, he's sure to get into a scrape by either marrying or having a duel on his hands, and I hardly know which is the worst. But what I was going to say is, that, now we have got over the sight-seeing, I'm determined to start to-morrow.”

Webworth helped himself to another *focaccio*, on the strength of his friend's information, almost groaning, while he cut it, at the recollection that he should so soon be deprived of this dainty.

“ I am afraid, my dear Fitz, it will be ‘ go further and fare worse’ with us, for we can nowhere be so well off as here.”

“ Every man to his fancy,” said Lord Fitzwarren, “ One man's meat is another's poison. *You* like Venice; *I* hate it, and wouldn't have stayed here a second day for any consideration if you had not urged it. But to-morrow I go; so hold yourself in readiness, old fellow.”

“ I wonder whether these *focaccios* would keep two or three

days, Fitz. for, if they will, it would be a good plan to take on a supply with us?"

"I dare say my courier can tell you, so I will ring for him."

The courier pronounced that the cakes, to be good, must be fresh every day, at which Webworth evinced considerable disappointment, and helped himself to the only remaining one on the dish. "I shall always remember Venice," observed he, "for nowhere have I ever tasted so delicious a cake as this same *focaccio*. I wish one could get it made in England, for the introduction of that and wild boar would be a wonderful acquisition to our epicures."

"For my part, I am so well satisfied with English dishes and cakes, that I require to see no other imported, and only wish I was back to enjoy them," replied Fitzwarren.

And now accoutments were to be called in, money to be drawn for at the banker's, and Venetian chains, *conterie*,* and other *bijouterie* and toys manufactured at Venice, were to be purchased for the ladies of the Wellerby family. Box after box, filled with these glittering articles, were brought to the Leone Bianco for Lord Fitzwarren's selection, and, as his companion eyed them, he sighed, and observed—

"Fitz, you really are a lucky fellow thus to have the power of proving to your absent friends that you have not forgotten them. Were I rich, like you, I should not neglect the opportunity of buying a few gifts for some of my friends at home."

"Select what you like, my dear Weby," replied the good-natured Fitzwarren, unconscious of the indelicacy of this palpable hint on the part of his companion, "and allow me to include them in my bill."

"Thanks, Fitz, you really are the prince of good fellows," and, with the greatest nonchalance, Mr. Webworth looked over the contents of the boxes, chose some gold chains and *conterie* to the value of at least thirty pounds, never demanding the prices, but ordering them to be carefully packed in separate cases.

"A good hit," thought Webworth. "Here I have secured, without expending a shilling, enough gifts to propitiate all the women whose country-houses I wish to frequent. I know how even the richest of them like to receive presents, and how unscrupulously they accept gifts from those who can but ill afford to make them. How I shall be welcomed now that I have something to offer! Yes, that *was* a good hit of mine; and what does it signify whether

* Pearl beads of various colours curiously enamelled.

Fitzwarren, with his large fortune, pays thirty or forty pounds more than he intended. Poor fellow ! once he gets married, there will be an end to his generosity to a friend. I have seen enough of the change effected, even in the most liberal men, by matrimony, not to be convinced that after it nothing more is to be expected from them by old companions. What a pity it is that such a good-hearted fellow as Fitz should be spoiled by a wife ; but it can't be helped, so I must make hay while the sun shines. He doesn't really care a fig for the girl, and could be easily talked out of marrying her ; but *I* should be blamed for breaking off the marriage, for, as poor Fitz is known to be such a weak fellow, people would say *I* advised him, and such a report would be injurious to me in families where there are daughters, so I must let things take their course. One of the bores of having one's friends fools is, that whenever they do anything less stupid than usual, the good-natured world attributes it to the person they most live with, who gets all the blame, but never derives any credit for their good-natured acts. Yes, I foresee this will be the last journey I shall take with poor Fitz, unless Lady Olivia shows her temper too much after marriage, and that he bolts, an event very likely to occur, for she has a devilish bad one, I know, and Fitz hasn't been accustomed to be crossed or tormented. Well, happen what may, I will so play my cards that nobody shall be able to blame *me* ; and, for the rest, whether they be happy or miserable, it will be their affair, and not mine."

Thus reasoned the selfish Webworth, wholly indifferent about the future fate of his kindest and most generous friend, whom he only looked on as a person through whose means he might enjoy the luxuries which his own limited fortune denied him.

When Lord Fitzwarren saw the various fresh packages piled up in the ante-room of the Leone Bianco, the morning of his departure from Venice, he asked his servant what they contained.

"They are the provisions ordered by Mr. Webworth, my lord, for the journey."

"Why, there is enough to last for a tour through all Italy."

"Yes, my lord, I believe so ; but Mr. Webworth would have all the *plats* which he thought the cook here most excelled in dressing, and, as your lordship sees, they take up a quantity of room."

"Why, Weby, my boy," said Lord Fitzwarren to his friend, who now made his appearance, "you have laid in a great stock of pro-

visions, I see, but how the deuce they are to be stowed away is more than I can tell."

"You must only have a roomy postchaise to convey them, Fitz," replied Webworth, with perfect coolness, "and this can easily be had at Mestrè or Padua."

"Order breakfast," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"Not just yet, my good fellow. Only wait another hour, and we can have some *focaccios* hot from the oven, and what does it matter to you whether we go an hour sooner or later?"

Good-natured as Lord Fitzwarren was, this new proof of the selfishness of his companion somewhat discomposed him, and he bit his nether lip as he turned away; but, quickly recovering his temper, he said, "Well, Webby, have it all your own way; you must not be disappointed about your favourite cakes."

Not only had Webworth ordered the large supply of comestibles piled up in the ante-room, but he had also procured many receipts for different *plats*, in the dressing of which the *chef de cuisine* of the Leone Bianco had evinced a more than ordinary degree of culinary skill, taking especial care that, as they were had under pretence of handing them over to Fitzwarren's future cook, the courier of his lordship should charge the *douceur* given to the *chef* for inditing them to that nobleman.

"With these receipts I shall secure a sojourn at many country-houses when I get back to England," thought Webworth, "where a new dish of any merit, like a new visiter of any talent, is sure to be well received, as they break the monotony of dull parties."

Long journeys, shut up *tête à tête* in a travelling-carriage, are a severe test of friendship. Such opportunities are afforded of discovering the weaknesses and defects of fellow-travellers, that persons must be, indeed, both amiable and agreeable to continue as good friends after as before a long journey. The digestive organs of Webworth, severely tried by the excesses into which he had been tempted by the good dinners at the Leone Bianco, were considerably deranged; yet he had not the prudence to abstain from further indulgence on the route, but, ill as he was, did ample justice to the delicacies brought from Venice. The effect of repletion is not less injurious on the temper than on the health, the derangement of the stomach irritating the whole nervous system, and rendering even persons generally good-humoured quite the reverse. Of the truth of this assertion Fitzwarren was soon furnished with ample proof, for Webworth became so sour and peevish, that every movement of

the carriage provoked an exclamation of discontent. At one moment, he declared himself half suffocated for want of air, and, when his friend good-naturedly let down all the glasses, he the next complained of chilliness, and expressed his conviction that he had caught a fever.

"Let us stop at the next town, and send for a physician," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"What! trust myself in the hands of an Italian quack? no, no, I'm not such a fool as that! How a man of your fortune, Fitz, can travel without an English doctor does surprise me. What in Heaven's name could tempt you to come abroad without one?"

"Why, simply because it never once entered my head that it might be necessary."

"And why were you to suppose that *you* should be more exempt from illness than other persons?" said Webworth, crossly.

"I never supposed anything about it. I have always had good health, and I take care not to indulge too much in eating."

"Well, that is a good one, Fitz, I must say. Why, I know no one who eats more than you do. I have often remarked your extraordinary appetite. O, what a jolt! This carriage is very ill hung, and the springs are on a confoundedly bad construction. Why don't you have your carriages built by Barker? He's the only man who can turn out an easy travelling-carriage."

"So I think, and therefore I never employ any other coach-maker."

"Well, then, for the nonce he has not succeeded, for this carriage is far from being an easy one. It is not near long enough to allow one to stretch one's legs comfortably."

"Yet I, who have longer ones than yours, Weby, can extend mine to their utmost."

"You are taller certainly, I admit, but I am sure my legs are the longest."

"I'll bet you fifty pounds they are not."

"You are always for deciding everything by a wager, Fitz."

"Yes, because it stops discussions."

"But for those who can't afford to throw away their money, wagers, you must allow, are absurd."

"Axy Beaulieu is not of that opinion."

"Especially when he meets with fellows like yourself, whose gold he so often pockets. There again, what a jolt! By Jove! I am nearly shaken to pieces."

In this manner did Lord Fitzwarren and his *soi-disant* friend journey on, until they reached Naples, Webworth still suffering from dyspepsia, and complaining all the while, and Fitzwarren's patience so exhausted that he determined on not proceeding to Sicily, as he had originally intended, in order to avoid the continuation of a *tête-à-tête*, of which he had already much more than he found agreeable. The first thing he did on arriving at Naples was to send for an English physician established there, to whose care he confided his atrabilious friend, not without having privately explained to him the cause, the effect of which he was called in to prescribe for.

"I had no idea that Webby could be so disagreeable a fellow-traveller," thought the good-natured Fitzwarren. "Fastening such a bore on oneself reminds me of the old saying, 'pull a rod to whip yourself.' I must take care how I do this again. But I forget that I need not trouble myself much on this point, for, as I am going to be married"—and he heaved a deep sigh as he recalled this fact to his memory—"I must, in future, travel only with my wife. Well, but, after all, I defy Livy to be half as disagreeable a post-chaise companion as Webworth was from Venice here. No, I must do her the justice to admit—though I don't like her, and, what is worse, do all I will I can't persuade myself into the belief that I do care a pin for her—she is a devilish good-tempered, obliging girl, and is very much in love with me. Poor Livy! how it would break her heart if she knew how perfectly indifferent I feel towards her; but I will never let her know it, poor soul! It's enough to be convinced of it myself. Going to marry a woman one does not love is for all the world like going in cold blood, and, finking horridly all the time, to leap a six bar gate, with a deep brook at the other side. I mustn't think of it, for it puts me into the blue devils. If it were to Louisa Sydney that I was going to be married, how differently should I feel! By Jupiter, I should be half mad with joy! How strange it is that I can't get that girl out of my head! How I envy that fellow, Strathern! He is, indeed, a lucky dog to have secured such a prize. I used to like him better than any other man of my acquaintance, though we had no two ideas in common, until *she* preferred him, and ever since I dislike seeing him, and I really believe I should not be sorry were I to hear he had gone to the other world. And yet, what good would that do me? None in the world! Have I not, like a blockhead, engaged to marry another? But, even were I free, and Strathern dead, Louisa Sydney wouldn't have

me. Well, *it* is vexatious to have youth, health, and a large fortune, and yet not be happy; and this is my case. I who used to be as gay as a lark, until this girl turned my head. Perhaps when I get back to England, and have my horses about me, I shall again be as I used to be. Who knows?"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Oh! why should envious Fate decree
That Love should ever subject be
To baseless hopes and groundless fears,
To jealous doubts and starting tears?
'Tis thus he makes his empire known,
When in fond hearts he rears his throne;
And those but little know his might
Who deem he gives alone delight,
For many bitter pangs must they
Endure who Love's stern laws obey.

So wholly engrossed were Mrs. Sydney and her daughter by the chagrin occasioned by the result of their interview with Strathern, that neither of them recollected to give orders to be denied to visitors, a precaution so necessary to be adopted when under the influence of painful emotions. The pride which had enabled Louisa to support that interview with apparent calmness subsided when her lover had withdrawn; and the fond girl, weeping over her disappointed hopes, now pale and subdued, wondered how she had been able to see him depart for ever, without having betrayed the anguish that was preying on her heart.

"Knowing his unworthiness, and aware of the deception to which he can condescend to stoop, why, why," thought Louisa, "do I still continue to deplore the illusion that is for ever vanished, and to dwell on his image?"

While these painful thoughts were passing in the mind of Louisa Sydney, her mother's was a prey to scarcely less distressing ones. In whom could she henceforth trust, when Strathern, whom she had believed to be as nearly faultless as erring man could be, had proved so unworthy? All the hopes so fondly cherished of seeing her daughter consigned to the protecting care of an honourable man, on the stability of whose affection and principles she could rely as

securities for her happiness, were now fallen to the ground ; and she felt that, with a nature like that of her child's, it would be long, if ever, before she should recover from the shock inflicted by the perfidy of him on whom she had bestowed her affection. How disagreeable, too, would it be, to meet those who had been aware of the engagement between Louisa and Strathern, and who would, doubtless, make a thousand comments on the subject, and circulate as many reports ! Mrs. Sydney, though a most amiable, was, in some things, a weak and timid woman ; and never did she experience a more painful consciousness of her own helplessness than at the present crisis, when, in a foreign land, without any male protector, she felt that her daughter's broken-off marriage would become a general topic of animadversion. What was to be done ? Would it not be advisable to leave Rome at once, and so avoid another meeting with Strathern, and the necessity of entering into any explanations with the inquisitive *soi-disant* friends who would be likely to ask them ? Yes, it would be best to leave Rome forthwith ; and, having come to this decision, she was on the point of communicating it to her daughter, when the door of her *salon* was thrown open, and " Il Signor Rhymer " was announced by her Italian servant. Of all visitors, he was precisely the one from whom she would the most shrink at such a moment, for from his keen and observant eye she well knew that the least change in the countenances of her daughter and herself could not be concealed, while, from a person of his cynical turn, and cold, sneering manner, she could expect but little sympathy.

" Have you been unwell, fair lady ? " said he, looking gravely, but kindly, at Louisa.

" Yes, I have been suffering from a severe cold in my head," replied she, with a much more steady tone of voice than her mother thought she could have assumed, but *pride*, that predominant feature in Louisa's character, had again resumed its influence, the moment she felt the searching eye of Mr. Rhymer fixed on her pale face, and she would rather have suffered untold agonies, than have let him seen that she was unhappy.

" A cold in the head," repeated Mr. Rhymer, " is a very disagreeable malady, but with young people all colds, save those of the heart, are soon got over. Ladies, I must do them the justice to admit, are not so subject to chilliness of that part as men are. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Sydney ? "

" I am so little versed in the subject," replied Mrs. Sydney, " that

you could not appeal to any person less capable of pronouncing an opinion."

"Your fair daughter, perhaps, can give me hers."

"My experience has not yet enabled me to be a judge of men's hearts," said Louisa; but her changeful cheek betrayed that the subject was a painful one to her. Had her voice been as tremulous as her cheek was pale, Mr. Rhymer would have spared her any further trial, for a sentiment of pity was awakened in his breast when he beheld one so young, fair, and gifted, with the traces of such deep and recent sorrow in her countenance; but her self-possession deceived even his scrutinizing glance, and led him to believe that the grief, of which the marks were yet visible, had more to do with the pride than the affections of the lovely being before him; and this conviction silenced the commiseration and sympathy he might otherwise have experienced for her.

"Have you seen Strathern to-day?" inquired he.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Sydney, "he was here a short time ago."

"I saw him at St. Peter's escorting *one* of the most beautiful young women I ever saw—mind, I say *one*, and not *the* most beautiful, for that, in this company, would be not only uncivil, but untrue."

Mr. Rhymer looked at Louisa Sydney as he spoke, and observed that she blushed up to her very temples, and then became as pale as marble.

"Who is this new beauty?" demanded he. "I thought I knew every handsome face in Rome, but this one I never previously beheld. From her being alone with Strathern, I conclude she must be nearly related to him; and yet I don't remember his having any near female relatives. You of course know who she is?" and he turned to Mrs. Sydney.

"No, I really don't," replied she, looking as embarrassed and pained as her daughter.

"I asked to be presented to his fair companion, a liberty which I conceived my age, and my having known him from his childhood, privileged me to take, but it seemed *he* was of a different way of thinking, for he appeared annoyed by the request—so indeed did the lady—muttered something only half intelligible about his taking some other opportunity of presenting me, and hurried away, leaving me looking, as all disappointed men do, very foolish. I concluded that here I should learn the name of the beautiful lady who has excited my interest as well as curiosity; but, since you

ladies are not acquainted with it, I must conclude that the same reason which influenced our friend Strathern to conceal it from *you* extended to me also."

Louisa Sydney, although tortured by the pangs of jealousy almost beyond her power of endurance, made a desperate and a successful effort to conceal her agony; for what will not pride effect in a female heart where it is deeply rooted? She affected to be busily occupied in arranging some drawings in a portfolio on the table near her sofa; but Mrs. Sydney, less skilled in concealing her feelings, betrayed her emotion so evidently that Mr. Rhymer saw at once that something painful had occurred between both ladies and Strathern, and believed it was, in some way or other, connected with the beautiful woman he had seen with the latter.

"I am come to take your commands for England," said Mr. Rhymer. "I leave the Eternal-City to-morrow, probably for the last time, for at my age I cannot look forward to crossing the Alps again. If I can take any parcel, or be of any use to you, fair ladies, do not hesitate to employ me."

Mrs. Sydney and Louisa thanked him, but declined troubling him with any parcel or commission; and he took his leave, pointedly expressing his hopes that when they again met he should find them in better health and spirits. "I don't think," were his parting words, "that of late Rome has agreed with either of you, and I shall be glad to hear you have left it."

When certain that he had left the house, Mrs. Sydney rang the bell, and desired that no visitors were to be admitted.

"The Signor Strathern is of course not included in this order," said the servant.

"There are no exceptions," observed Mrs. Sydney; and the man, with a look of extreme surprise, withdrew. The fond mother approached the sofa on the pillow of which Louisa had hid her face, and the weeping girl was pressed to her heart, and their tears mingled for some minutes. "Let us leave Rome, my child. To-morrow let us go. We shall be less wretched any where than here."

"Yes, dearest mother, let us depart. Let us go to-morrow! I long to be away from a place where everything reminds me of *him*. Oh! mother, who could have dreamed that he would have been so lost to every sense of propriety, to common decency itself, as to appear publicly with a person he dared not name to us, and to whom he dared not present Mr. Rhymer!—to enter a temple dedicated to the Deity with such a one in the open day, and with the certainty of

meeting many of those who know his engagement to me! Oh! it is too dreadful, and proves that he is indeed lost to every sense of honour and of shame."

Mrs. Sydney made every arrangement for leaving Rome the next day. Louisa and she had long wished to visit Milan, and thence to proceed to the Lake of Como to spend some time. They now determined on carrying this intention into effect, and busied themselves in preparations for their approaching journey. Strathern, meanwhile, had no sooner handed Lady Delmington to the carriage in which her husband was waiting for her, than, after having declined the pressing invitation of his friend to accompany them in their drive around Rome, and to dine with them on *this* their last evening there, than he represented, in a whisper in Lord Delmington's ear, the meeting with Rhymer, his request to be presented to Lady Delmington, which could not be complied with until her marriage was acknowledged, and that, from the refusal, that gentleman would doubtlessly form the most erroneous impressions relative to her, and not only form them, but convey them to others.

"He will be sure to tell some dear friends of mine, with whom I am so situated, that I ought to have no concealments," continued Strathern, "that I refused to present a lady with whom he saw me walking *tête à tête*."

"Ah! I see, my dear friend, that you, too, are about to become a Benedict," replied Lord Delmington. "I therefore release you from your promise of secrecy—at least, to the dear friends in question."

Strathern hastened back to Mrs. Sydney, determined to ask an explanation of the cause of the coldness of his reception in the morning. He felt anxious too to acquaint his affianced wife and her mother why he had absented himself from their society the preceding evening, and who the lady was with whom Mr. Rhymer had seen him at St. Peter's, before that gentleman had an opportunity of mentioning the circumstance to them, as he felt convinced he would not fail to do on the first occasion.

Every angry feeling had subsided in the breast of the lover, as, with rapid steps, he proceeded towards the abode of Mrs. Sydney. Two hours' absence from Louisa had given him time to reflect on the folly on his part of having left her without demanding an explanation of the cause of her altered manner; and so disposed was he not only to pardon any ebullition of temper produced, as he believed it must have been, by pique or wounded feelings, occasioned

by his having resisted her desire of returning to her the previous evening, that he now censured himself for not having, on first seeing his beloved Louisa that day, apologized for his absence, and assured her of his regret for it.

“How absurd of me,” thought Strathern, “to allow my misplaced pride to prevent me from atoning for the previous night’s neglect of complying with her wishes! How unlover-like has my conduct been! but I will solicit her pardon for this my first offence, and she will—she must grant it. Well might her fond mother look coldly on me, when she saw that, instead of apologizing to her daughter for my unprecedented absence of a whole evening from her presence, I left her without even asking if I had offended, and acted as if I had been the ill-used person; and so at the time I considered myself. The old infirmity, pride, had mastered my better feelings; but now my heart yearns to confess my error, and to see the beautiful face of my Louisa again beaming with smiles at my approach, and to have that dear, fair little hand accorded to me, and pressed to my lips. She looked pale, too, this morning, and her eyes had not their usual lustre. She was probably ill, but too proud to acknowledge it; for my Louisa partakes my besetting sin, pride. What a brute I was to leave her under such circumstances, instead of remaining until I had won her pardon, and seen her restored to her usual spirits. O, Pride, Pride! by thee are weak mortals still hurried on to wound those they best love, and to inflict pain on themselves and others! I must conquer this failing, or how small a chance of the happiness I have promised myself in wedlock will be mine, if I allow its dictates to influence my conduct! I ought to have remembered that pride is also her besetting sin, and to have made allowance for it, instead of which I have irritated this morbid feeling into action, and permitted her to suffer from its consequences two whole hours, an age to one with such susceptible feelings as hers. But I will humble myself, and crave pardon, and all will be well. Oh, how I long to be forgiven!”

Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of Strathern, until he arrived at the door of Mrs. Sydney. He was as usual ascending the stairs without inquiring whether the ladies were at home, when the Italian servant stopped him, and declared that the signora and signorina were gone out.

“Which way—in what direction?” demanded Strathern, greatly disappointed at not finding them.

"I was absent from the house when the ladies went out," replied the man; but an air of embarrassment and confusion in his countenance when he met the keen glance of his questioner, revealed to Strathern that the servant was not speaking the truth.

"The ladies *are* at home, but have desired you not to admit visitors. It is so, is it not? Come, speak the truth, and tell me, Leonardo."

"*Si, signor, è vero.*"

"But I, you know, am not a mere visiter, Leonardo, therefore, you may be assured, am not included in the prohibition."

Leonardo shook his head gravely, and answered, "*Si, signor, si.* When I got my orders, I thought it so impossible that *sua eccellenza* could be included, that I asked the question, and *la signora*, in the presence of *la signorina*, positively told me there was *no exception.*"

"Will you, my good Leonardo, go and tell the ladies that I am here—that I desire above all things to see them—that I have something important to communicate."

"*Si, signor,*" said the good-natured Italian, who, aware that Strathern was to be the husband of Miss Sydney, concluded that some little lovers' quarrel had occasioned a momentary coldness on the part of the ladies, which it only required an interview with the Signor Strathern to set right, and, glad to be the medium of so desirable an event, he hurried to deliver the message. The man looked so much interested in the success of the message of which he was the bearer, that Mrs. Sydney did not reprove him for his disobedience to her orders.

"You hear the request, dearest," said the anxious mother. "Shall we assent to it?"

"No, mother, not for worlds. Oh! never let me see him again."

"Tell Mr. Strathern that we are occupied, and can see *no one*," said Mrs. Sydney, gravely, "and be sure, Leonardo, that you admit no person whatever."

Never, in his whole life, had Strathern's pride been exposed to so rude a trial as while he waited for the return of the servant with Mrs. Sydney's message. She would not—*could* not refuse to see him. After all, how slight had been his offence, taking it even in its gravest point of view, and how great was the indignity offered to him, the affianced husband of her daughter, in thus including

his name in the list of prohibited visitors ! Even Leonardo had felt this ; he, Strathern, saw he had. Yes, it was an indignity offered to him, and he keenly felt it ; but he loved Louisa Sydney too fondly, too devotedly, to resent it as he otherwise should, and he would quell every emotion of wounded pride rather than be another hour kept from her presence. His heart throbbed violently when he heard the footsteps of Leonardo descending the stairs. How slowly he walked ! Was it possible that Mrs. Sydney had refused to admit him to her presence ? No, it could not be ; and yet the slow and measured steps of the servant denoted that *he* could not be the bearer of good tidings. One glance at Leonardo's face convinced Strathern that he bore a refusal to his request, and the blood mounted impetuously to his very temples.

“ The signora and the signorina desire me to say that they will see *no one*, ” said the servant, looking so sorrowfully while he uttered the words as to prove the regret with which he pronounced them.

“ It is well, ” said Strathern, drawing himself up to the full height of his tall person, his pride irritated to the utmost degree, and his breast filled with indignation ; and he turned from the door so lately sought with a heart throbbing with fond emotions, now deeply lacerated, and alive only to the insult he had received. No, it was plain that he had been trifled with, and his affection made the sport of a vain girl's caprice. But was it thus that he was to be dismissed, without a word, or even a line of explanation, and for so trivial a cause as his not having returned the previous night to see Louisa ? It was, it could be nothing else than a pretext for breaking with him ; but how unworthy was such conduct on their part ! And Mrs. Sydney, too, how he had been deceived in her ! He returned to his hotel, his mind in a state of agitation not to be described. He gave orders to be denied to all visitors, and took up his pen to write to Louisa one more appeal before he could resign her for ever. Love mastered indignation, and a gush of tenderness flooded his eyes, and fell on the paper as he endeavoured to portray his feelings on it. Yes, the manly, the proud Strathern wept in uncontrollable emotion as he recalled the happy hours passed with his first, his only love, and contrasted them with the dreary ones which he must henceforth be doomed to spend, if separated from her. But no, he dared not anticipate a life so wretched as his must be, if he could not succeed in making his peace with Louisa. Existence without her would, indeed, be a blank, the more gloomy

and cheerless from the bright prospects of the future he had allowed himself to indulge ever since she had consented to be his. He commenced a letter, but he found the words so tame and spiritless, so far from expressing his feelings, that he tore the paper, and began another. That shared the same fate as its predecessor, and he was about to make a third effort when his servant entered his room to announce that Lord Delmington, on entering his hotel after a drive, had burst a blood-vessel, was supposed to be dying, and that Lady Delmington, half distracted, had sent to entreat his immediate presence. Shocked and grieved by this painful intelligence, Strathern instantly hurried off to his friend, whom he found in the utmost danger. Though prohibited from speaking by his physicians, he no sooner saw Strathern enter, than he addressed him—

“Do not leave me, my dear friend; and, should I die, be a friend to my poor Mary.”

The exertion of uttering even these few words was followed by a fresh discharge of blood from the ruptured vessel in his chest, and, as he sank back exhausted on his pillow, pale as marble, with the sanguine stream flowing from his mouth, Strathern expected every moment that he would breathe his last. The physician gave strict injunctions that he should be kept perfectly quiet, and told Strathern that, as Lord Delmington appeared to attach such importance to *his* presence, he hoped he would not leave him until he was more composed. Lady Delmington moved not from the side of her husband's bed. There she sat, with her eyes fixed on his face, with an expression of such unutterable love and devotion in those dark and tearful orbs, that even the physician, though accustomed to similar scenes of sadness and trial, was moved by the intensity of her feelings, and the control she exercised over them, lest the sight of her sorrow should excite the mind of her suffering husband. It was beautiful to behold how she struggled to appear calm and hopeful when her heart was tortured by apprehensions for the life of him on whom her every hope, nay, her very existence, depended. And Lord Delmington, too, took courage from her composed aspect, and looked at her as if his thoughts were occupied solely about her. Whenever he attempted to speak, she implored him to be silent, and then he would appeal with his eyes to his friend, as if to recommend his adored wife to his care. Every thought of his own griefs was forgotten by Strathern, in the anxiety occasioned by the danger of his friend, and his sympathy for Lady Delmington. How

often did he wish, during the long hours that he passed in that darkened and silent room, that he was on his former habits of familiar good understanding with Mrs. Sydney, and that he could have requested her to extend her motherly care to the youthful and lovely being before him, bowed down by affliction, yet struggling so heroically to suppress every symptom of it! Yes, Louisa, his own beautiful and kind-hearted affianced wife would have been as a ministering angel to that sorrowing young creature, and his poor friend would have been soothed by seeing his wife under the protection of women so good and pure as Mrs. Sydney and her daughter.

While the mind of Strathern was filled with such thoughts, evening faded into night, and night passed slowly and heavily along, the poor sufferer sometimes falling into a disturbed slumber, from which he would awaken to search for his tender nurse, and then to look at his friend. Never did the lids of that fair and youthful watcher by the sick couch droop during the long and dreary hours of that night, as, with her eyes fixed on the face of the sleeper, she listened with inexpressible anxiety to his low breathing, and, when he awoke, met his glance with a smile, such as angels might be supposed to bestow on slumbering infants.

“What love can equal that of woman?” thought Strathern, as he marked the devotion of the young wife. “Who like her can forget self in the deep, the all-engrossing care of one dear to her. Ah! well may we overlook and pardon the slight defects peculiar to the lovely sex, in consideration of the many virtues they possess, and the inestimable blessings they confer on us. Yes Scott, that profound reader of the human heart, was right when he said of them—

“O! woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
When pain and sickness wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou.”

The feelings of Strathern became softened towards the whole sex, as he witnessed the unwearied tenderness of the fair specimen of it seated opposite to him, and as he pictured to himself his affianced wife in a similar position, watching over his own couch, if he were chained to it by illness. It has been said that a man cannot entertain a real affection for one woman, without experiencing a sentiment of regard for the whole sex. Strathern acknowledged the truth of the assertion; for the admiration excited by Lady Delmington's conduct, during the heavy trial under which it

had been called forth, extended itself to all womankind, centering itself chiefly on the fair creature who was never absent from his thoughts, and at whose feet he hoped to prostrate himself on the coming day, and to implore oblivion of all sins of omission, for those of commission he was sure he had none to avow.

Day at length dawned, its grey light gleamed through the shutters, and the coldness peculiar to early morn made itself felt by the watchers of the sick couch. Strathern's frame involuntarily trembled as the chillness extended over it; but the anxious wife, though her pale face assumed a bluish tint, betrayed no consciousness of the cold—no shudder passed over *her* delicate form. There she sat, forgetful of all, save the danger of the beloved object, from whose face she never even for a moment averted her anxious gaze. And now the chill grey of morning was changed to a brighter hue; the sun by degrees began to let his beams pierce the clouds, until they flooded the sky with light; the birds welcomed the bright luminary with their joyous notes; and the garish light of day almost extinguished the pale and flickering gleam of the night-lamp.

The slumberer awoke, and would have spoken, but the ever-watchful care of love prevented the exertion, and honeyed words of affection were softly and lowly poured into his ear, beseeching him to be silent. The physician, who had remained in the next room ready to be called in case of danger, was now summoned, and pronounced his patient to be doing well. Perfect quiet and repose were commanded; and, with strict attention to these, he declared that he entertained no doubt of Lord Delmington's recovery.

Strathern was now released from his station at the bedside, and, having pledged himself to return to it in a short time, left the hotel, and was proceeding to his own abode, tired and jaded from his sleepless night, and the anxiety of the last twenty-four hours, when two travelling carriages with post-horses, preceded by a mounted courier, drove past him. At one glance he recognised them to be Mrs. Sydney's, yet he could hardly believe the evidence of his sight; but, as if to make assurance doubly sure, he saw Louisa, whose eyes met his, turn away from his gaze, without even a bow to mark her recognition of him, and, brief as had been his glance of her, he noticed that her countenance expressed anger and disdain at the *rencontre*. For a moment he stood as if transfixed, gazing after the carriages; but the next, forgetful of everything but that his beloved was leaving Rome, without an explanation, and in anger with him, and maddened by the accumulated emotions

that filled his heart, he rushed after the carriages, determined to implore, nay, to demand, a hearing from Mrs. Sydney and her daughter.

It seemed, however, as if the fates conspired against him, for the postillions put their horses into so brisk a trot, that they were soon out of sight, and, panting and heated from his useless pursuit, Strathern stopped to lean against a house. Some stray persons going to their work looked at him, shrugged their shoulders, and remarked to each other on the folly of the *forestieri*, who turned night into day, for it was evident that the signor before them had not been in bed. This remark reminded the subject of it of the disorder of his dress, and then came the thought of how strange his apparition at such an hour, and in such a guise, must have appeared to Miss Sydney. But every thing was against him. An evil destiny seemed to pursue him for the last two days—the arrival of the Delmingtons, then the illness of his poor friend, and now the being seen, at early morning, in the garb of the previous day, with his face pallid, his beard unshorn, and hair in disorder. Yes, everything conspired against him, and it was useless to struggle with his fate.

The departure of Mrs. Sydney incontestibly proved that she and her daughter wished to give no opportunity for explanation—that they had determined on breaking off the engagement between Louisa and himself, consequently all was now at an end. Strathern's heart sickened as this conviction entered his mind. His pride, which for the last day had been vanquished by his love, now began to resume its empire; and with a bitterness of feeling never previously experienced, he vowed that, insulted and spurned as he had been, without any cause to justify such ill-treatment, he would no more seek a reconciliation with those who had so wronged him, but bear up as well as he could against the deep and poignant regret that he well knew must for years, if not for ever, be his. The thought occurred to him, that probably Mrs. Sydney might have left a letter for him at the hotel, and, unwilling to let his servant go for it, or to leave its delivery to the waiters at the hotel where she had resided, he determined to go there at once himself to demand it.

He turned his steps to the well known house, but oh! with what different feelings to those with which he had hitherto been wont to approach it! No letter or message had been left. The ladies had only the day before decided on going, and meant, it was believed,

to proceed to England. With this vague intelligence was Strathern compelled to be satisfied. Indignation helped to enable him to bear up against the regret that might otherwise have unmanned him; and he proceeded to his hotel, where he would gladly have remained, to give way in solitude to the sad thoughts that filled his breast, had not his promise to return to Lord Delmington obliged him to forego that melancholy indulgence.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A female glutton how I hate!
 With eyes intent upon her plate,
 Partaking eagerly of all,
 Fish, flesh, and fowl, within her call.
 Such women you are sure to find
 With manners coarse, and vulgar mind;
 And more of animal, I ween,
 Than gentle dame are in them seen.

All preparations being made, Mrs. Maclaurin and suite left Rome *en route* for Naples, the lady and her *dame de compagnie* occupying a travelling chariot, and her attendants following in a roomy coach. She would fain have had Lord Alexander Beaulieu take the place of Mrs. Bernard; but his lordship, under the plea of such a step exposing her to censure, declined the proposal, and preceded her in his own postchaise, acting, as he said, as her *avant-garde*. Aware of the valuable jewels in her possession—in which, from the prospect of his soon having a personal property in them, he took a very lively interest—he advised the having a strong escort from Terracina, lest the brigands should make a descent from the mountains, and bear off the treasure.

“Oh! what a country!” exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin, “when people can’t travel without a guard. How unlike dear old England, where you may go from one end of it to the other with half the jewels in the land, without ever requiring any one to look after them except yourself or your servants! Well, let me once get back, and if any one catches me going abroad again, I’ll give ’em leave to pillage me, that’s all.”

“By Jove! that’s a good hint,” thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu;

“for, now I know her antipathy to the Continent, I will take care to spend the greater part of my time there, and *plante madame* in England.

They had not proceeded more than three posts from Rome, when Mrs. Maclaurin complained of hunger, and insisted on having the comestibles, with which she had largely provided herself, unpacked. She devoured with avidity what was set before her, declaring all the time that the things were so bad that she could hardly eat them, and washed down her repast with copious draughts of wine, unmixed with water. Her future husband turned from her with disgust, as he beheld the wonderful feats her appetite performed; and even the servants who attended at her luncheon eyed her with surprise. But she was too well occupied to observe the impression she produced: and even had she noticed it, it would not have had the least effect in modifying her gross habit of eating and drinking. No! Mrs. Maclaurin was not a woman to be deterred from indulging her taste by any dread of the opinion of others, and the thought of there being any impropriety in her *gourmandise* never entered her head.

“She will inevitably destroy her health,” thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he observed the various viands piled on her plate rapidly disappear, and saw glass after glass emptied. “What a voracious! If, however, these gross habits should abridge her days, I shall hail with pleasure her indulgence in them: but I must spare myself as much as possible the disgust of beholding the operation I have just now witnessed.”

When crossing the Marais Pontine, Mrs. Maclaurin, who had heard of the danger of slumbering while exposed to the impure air of that region, commanded Mrs. Bernard to prevent her sleeping—a difficult task; for the repletion produced by her copious luncheon rendered her extremely disposed to enjoy a *siesta*.

“If you were not as dull as ditch-water, and wholly incapable of amusing me, I might easily be kept awake,” said she to her much-enduring companion: “but no wonder I feel drowsy, shut up with such a silent mope as you are. When persons offer themselves as *dams de company*, they ought to know that one of the first duties of their place is to amuse their mistress. Now, you never amused me for a single moment since you entered my service. Quite the contrary, you have always *enured* me to death, as Justin says. Indeed, if I only happen to look at you, you set me yawning”—and suiting the action to the word, Mrs. Maclaurin opened her jaws

to their widest extent, and soon after, by certain nasal sounds, gave notice that she was in the arms of Morpheus. Mindful of her injunctions to be awakened, Mrs. Bernard ventured gently to touch Mrs. Maclaurin's shoulder, and called "Madam! madam!" but finding this produced no effect, she proceeded to more energetic measures, and calling more loudly "Madam! madam!" she shook that lady a little roughly, who, thus suddenly awoke from a slumber in which she had been dreaming of being attacked by brigands, she really imagined she was in their hands, and, in the first moment of being aroused, she struck at Mrs. Bernard with all her might and main, crying out "Thieves! thieves!—murder!—help, help!" while Mrs. Bernard screamed aloud, as blow after blow from the robust fists of Mrs. Maclaurin came vigorously down on her face, head, and shoulders. The postillions heard the cries, and stopped their horses; the servants descended from the rumble, and opened the carriage door, when poor Mrs. Bernard was discovered sobbing and weeping, her face bruised, her nose bleeding, and her bonnet crushed, and Mrs. Maclaurin, who was now quite awake, loudly reproaching her for having allowed her to sleep even for a moment, declaring that she was convinced that the malaria had already attacked her, owing to the negligence of that stupid fool, who allowed her to sleep, Heaven only knew how long. Lord Alexander Beaulieu's postillion stopped also, and his lordship, wondering what could be the matter, left his carriage and came to the door of Mrs. Maclaurin's. He found that lady flushed and fevered, uttering reproaches against her helpless companion, who, seriously hurt, was sobbing in the corner of the chariot.

"Served you right for letting me sleep," exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin. "If you had kept me awake, I should not have dreamt of being attacked by the brigands, and would not have beaten you. But what was I to think or do, when, in the middle of my dream of them horrid fellows pulling and hauling me, I found myself shaken? Wasn't it quite natural for me to defend myself? And so I did; and, if you are hurt, you have no one to blame but yourself. So it's no use your going on weeping and wailing, as if all the bones in your body were broken, when you have only got a few knocks; and, as for your bonnet being spoilt, I'll give you a present of a new one when we get to Naples. So leave off crying, for it's a thing I can't bear."

Cold-hearted and selfish as was Lord Alexander Beaulieu, he was shocked and disgusted at witnessing the utter want of feeling of his

future wife. He saw, too, the smiles and nods interchanged by the servants of Mrs. Maclaurin, and felt a sentiment of pity for the unfortunate *dame de compagnie*, who was the victim of that coarse and unfeminine woman. He despatched a servant to the next house to obtain a glass of water for her, of which, having partaken a portion, which did her good, the poor lady was restored to some degree of composure.

"I'm dreadfully thirsty, I can tell you," said Mrs. Maclaurin; "but nobody seems to think of *my* comfort, after all I've gone through in that terrible dream, and the dreadful fatigue I endured in defending myself, as I thought, against the brigands."

A second glass of water was obtained; but the lady, having declared her aversion to plain cold water, which, she asserted, always made her ill, proposed having some wine unpacked, to mix with it: and, though Lord Alexander Beaulieu reminded her of the danger of malaria in stopping in the Marais Pontine, she would not relinquish the draught of wine-and-water she wished for. At length, having satisfied her thirst, the carriages moved rapidly on, Mrs. Maclaurin warning her *dame de compagnie* not to let her sleep again, under penalty of the chance of a repetition of the blows already received.

Seated in his postchaise, Lord Alexander Beaulieu's reflections were any thing but agreeable, as he was whirled along. His horror and detestation of his future wife increased every day—nay, every hour—as circumstances brought to light some new proof of her selfishness and total want of feeling. "Not one redeeming point can I discover in her," thought he. "But perhaps it is better I should not. Were she less odious, less unworthy, I might feel some compunction for wedding her, hating her as I do, and for the conduct I am determined on adopting towards her when we are married; but, as it is, I shall have no self-reproach, and she shall pay for all her sins; for the wealth that purchases her a husband, she shall find has given her a master."

When the travellers halted for the night, Mrs. Maclaurin found great fault with the inn and its accommodation; she, nevertheless, did ample honour to the repast ready for her arrival, and acknowledged that *curriers* (as she pronounced *courriers*) were most useful persons on a journey, declaring that when she returned to England she would never go anywhere without one, alleging that it was so pleasant to find dinner ready when one arrived, instead of being kept waiting for it, which always put her out of temper. Mrs. Ber-

ward was so unwell that she was obliged to go to bed as soon as she descended from the carriage; and, had it not been for the humanity of the mistress of the inn, she would have been totally neglected, Mrs. Maclaurin not bestowing a thought on her, and Mademoiselle Justine emulating that lady's indifference towards the unfortunate *dame de compagnie*. Lord Alexander Beaulieu reminded his future wife that some care ought to be bestowed on the poor invalid.

"Oh! I dare say some of my people will look after her," replied that heartless person; but *he*, having little confidence in this vague assurance, went to the mistress of the inn, and solicited her good offices for the solitary and suffering woman. Glad was Lord Alexander Beaulieu when the journey was over, although it brought him still nearer to the goal which, notwithstanding the wealth it would bring, he could not contemplate with out feelings of disgust. To be relieved from the constraint imposed on him by the continued presence of his odious *fiancée* gave him pleasure, and in the bustle of a crowded city he felt less overpowered by the sense of his position than when isolated with her *en route*. The travellers took up their abode at the Grand Bretagne, in the Strada di Caija, where the best suite of rooms in the hotel had been prepared for their reception, and where an excellent dinner awaited their arrival.

"Ah! this is something like," exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin; as she entered the spacious apartments assigned to her. "Bordoni, I must say, has got me very good rooms. I am dying with hunger; so pray, my lord, let us dine without dressing."

"Don't you think it would refresh you to have a warm bath before dinner?" suggested *le mari futur*.

"Oh! no, I couldn't wait. I'm much too hungry."

Bordoni, the *courrier*, was too well acquainted with Mrs. Maclaurin's habits and taste to have forgotten to have dinner served as quickly as possible after her arrival; and, while Lord Alexander Beaulieu was advising her to have a bath, dinner was announced.

"Yes, Bordoni is a capital *currier*—that there's no denying. I know by the good smell that he has managed to get me some rich gravy soup. This, and a glass or two of old Madeira, will refresh me more than all the baths in the world. Capital soup—strong and plenty of pepper. It is the best I have tasted since I left England."

"Oh! the barbarian," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who found the said *potage* abominable.

"I'm no admirer of baths," resumed the lady, "and always think people must be very dirty who require them. There were

some ladies in the same hotel with me at Brighton, who used to have warm baths three or four times a week ; but, for my part, I don't see the necessity of them."

Mrs. Bernard looked embarrassed, and Lord Alexander Beaulieu changed the subject.

"I'll try another glass of that Madeira. Will you join me, my lord?"

"With your permission, I prefer some light French wine. I seldom drink any other."

"Then you are wrong, for them French wines are wishy-washy stuff, enough to spoil the strongest stomach, always excepting champagne. *That* is a pleasant wine, and puts one into good spirits. I'll drink a glass of champagne with you, if you have no objection?"

"Let me recommend you a glass of wine, Mrs. Bernard," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, shocked at observing the total neglect that poor woman experienced at the hands of Mrs. Maclaurin. "It will do you good, after the fatigue of your journey."

"I seldom drink wine, my lord, and am fearful of venturing just now, as my head still aches."

"Stuff—nonsense! When his lordship condescends to ask you to take a glass of wine with him, it is very rude of you to refuse. You never see *me* behave in that manner. There, take your glass of wine without any more to do, and be thankful that you meet with such kindness."

The blood rose to Mrs. Bernard's temples, and a tear trembled in her eye; but she raised the glass of wine poured out for her to her lips, and, having tasted it, laid it down.

"Look at her," said Mrs. Maclaurin; "that's what she does every day. Just tastes the wine as if it was vinegar, and then lets it go away. I hate such squeamishness, for my part, for I don't see why any one should be ashamed or afraid to drink a few glasses of wine."

"I have not been accustomed to do so, madam."

"To be sure you have not—how could you afford it? But when it costs you nothing, you needn't refuse it. What! a piece of roast beef. Ah! if it had some fat to it, I could almost fancy myself in dear Old England. I dote on the inside slice of a sirloin of roast beef, with plenty of horseradish and gravy, and mashed potatoes; but it's no use thinking of such good things out of England, for nowhere else can they be had. Oh! take away my plate; this

stuff is no more like English beef than chalk is to cheese. What a country! where one can't get so much as a bit of good roast beef."

Dinner had only been a few minutes removed, when the door of the *salle à manger* was thrown open, and, "Milor Fitzvarrins" being announced by the Italian waiter, in came Lord Fitzwarren. He started back on seeing that his friend Lord Alexander Beaulieu was not alone, and would have retreated, but Mrs. Maclaurin, to the extreme discomfiture of her future spouse, stood up, and said, "I beg, my lord, you will sit down without ceremony, and take a glass of wine."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu had risen from his chair, with the intention of conducting his unwelcome visiter into the next room, in order to avoid making him acquainted with Mrs. Maclaurin; but that lady, determined not to let this opportunity of adding another lord to the list of her acquaintance escape, defeated his intention. Fitzwarren, unskilled in controlling or concealing his emotions, stared with astonishment at Mrs. Maclaurin, and then at his friend, but, obeying the repeated desire of the lady, sat down.

"I heard only five minutes ago that you were here, Axy," said he, "and so hurried off to see you, little dreaming that you were not alone. I hope, ma'am," continued he, bowing to Mrs. Maclaurin, "that you'll excuse me for breaking in upon you in this abrupt manner."

"Pray, don't mention it, my lord; I am very happy to make your acquaintance."

"If I don't mistake, ma'am, this is not our first meeting. I think I had the pleasure of seeing you one night at Rome, at a masked ball," and Fitzwarren's good-natured face relaxed into a smile at the recollection of the lady's appearance and conduct on that occasion, while Lord Alexander Beaulieu's became flushed with shame.

"Yes; now I remember your face, my lord. It was at the *ball-cost-chew-me* I saw you. You may recollect I appeared there as the Queen of Scots, and wore a great many diamonds—indeed, more than any other lady at the ball."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu sat on thorns, while his friend, much amused, entered heartily into the spirit of quizzing the absurd person before him.

"But won't you have some wine and fruit?" resumed Mrs. Maclaurin, on hospitable thoughts intent. "Why, Lord Alexander,

you don't take care of your friend. You know that any acquaintance of *yours* is very welcome to me."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Fitzwarren. "You are right. I don't think, to tell you the truth, that Axy *does* seem glad to see an old friend, and, were it not for your kindness, I should really think that I was an unwelcome intruder."

"Your lordship must not think so; must he, Lord Alexander? I'm sure I have the greatest pleasure in seeing you, and in a foreign country; and, above all, in such a place as Italy, it's quite delightful to see English faces, especially if they are not impudent and uncivil, like some of those I met at Rome. Would you believe it, my lord, there was an ugly old woman there, with two ill-looking, insolent daughters, who behaved so rudely to me one day at the Carnival, that I was obliged to give them a piece of my mind."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu made several signs to Mrs. Maclaurin to stop, for he feared every moment that she would name Lady Wellerby and the Ladies Olivia and Sophia; but she, not comprehending his winks and frowns, turned, and provokingly asked him what he meant? This *mal à propos* question increased his embarrassment, which his friend Lord Fitzwarren, who had often been piqued and mystified by him, greatly enjoyed.

"And so the ladies at Rome behaved ill to you?" observed he, desirous of drawing out the subject of her grievances, and of tormenting Lord Alexander.

"Yes, my lord—shamefully. I went as a sultan to the Carnival....."

"The devil you did!" exclaimed Fitzwarren, bursting into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Mrs. Maclaurin means as a sultana," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, getting red in the face, and biting his lip.

"Well, sultan or sultana, it's all the same," interrupted Mrs. Maclaurin. "What right had they to turn their backs on me when I spoke civilly to them? If that's what they call manners, I can tell 'em they know little of politeness."

"Don't think any more about them, I entreat you," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, anxious to put an end to the subject.

"But if it relieves this amiable lady's mind to tell me how ill-used she was, you ought not to prevent her," observed Lord Fitzwarren, assuming an air of great sympathy with Mrs. Maclaurin.

"Ay, my lord, that's what I say. I don't know, I'm sure why Lord Alexander should wish to stop my telling his friend what

hurt my feelings so much ; and I am greatly obleeged to you for taking such an interest in my case. But, had you seen me bruised and battered from head to foot that day, it would have melted a heart of stone."

"What! did the ladies you referred to proceed to such lengths as that?"

"Oh, no, my lord, *they* did not pelt me; it was the mob that did that. But I gave them as good as they brought, I warrant me, and pelted them as hard as I could, until the police arrested me."

Lord Fitzwarren now opened wide his eyes, and stared at the lady, who, excited by the recollection of her trials on that eventful day, poured out a large bumper of wine, and drank it off at one draught.

"The very thoughts of what I suffered on that occasion overpowers me," resumed she; "and if that person you see there," pointing to Mrs. Bernard, "had but shown a proper spirit, I'd have had the best of it, for I was determined never to give in."

"Right—quite right," observed Lord Fitzwarren. "I honour your courage, and, had I been there, would have stood by you to the last."

"Thank your lordship; I'm very sensible of your kindness."

"Then the marks of that lady's face"—and he looked at Mrs. Bernard's—"were inflicted by the mob at Rome. What cowards!"

"No, my lord; in coming through the Pontine Marshes I fell asleep and dreamt that I was attacked by the brigands, when it was only that person, who is my *dam de company*, that was trying to awake me; so I laid about me in good earnest, half asleep and half awake, and she bears the marks. But it was her own fault. What business had she to let me fall asleep, when I ordered her to keep me awake?"

Lord Fitzwarren, greatly amused, endeavoured in vain to restrain his laughter; but his efforts were unsuccessful, and he laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks, while Lord Alexander Beau-lieu evinced sundry symptoms of annoyance and dissatisfaction.

"Ah! that's something like a laugh," observed Mrs. Maclaurin. "It does one good to hear it. And I could now laugh myself when I think of my beating Mrs. Bernard, taking her all the while for one of them brigands of whom I heard so much. But I was too angry at the time to laugh, for it was shameful of her to let me sleep, when it is so dangerous in them Pontiny Mashcs."

"How long have you been here, Fitzwarren?" asked Lord

Alexander Beaulieu, anxious to change the subject; "and what has become of Webworth?"

"I have been here three days, and Webworth is in his bed, devilishly ill with a bilious fever, in consequence of his *gourmandise*. Until I travelled with him, I had no idea what a glutton he is; and when he has deranged his stomach by over-eating, his temper becomes unbearable."

"Poor gentleman!" said Mrs. Maclaurin, with a look of deep sympathy. "You should advise him to take a couple of digestive pills with his soup. Nothing relieves the stomach so much, and after taking them one may safely indulge one's appetite. It's a horrid bore to sit down to a good dinner, and not be able to enjoy it. But, talking of eating, I wonder they don't send up coffee and tea. I feel very peckish, and hope they have some hot cakes, muffins, and crumpets. Ring the bell, Mrs. Bernard."

"Pray, allow me," said Lord Fitzwarren, rising from his chair, and ringing the bell before Mrs. Bernard could reach it.

"Oh! my lord, I'm quite shocked you should have the trouble. I only keep that person," and Mrs. Maclaurin glanced carelessly at her unfortunate *dame de compagnie*, "to ring the bell, write my notes, and read the newspapers for me."

The obtuse but good-natured Fitzwarren was shocked at this unfeeling speech, and looked with pity on Mrs. Bernard, who changed colour, and evinced by her quivering lip and moistened eye that she felt ashamed at being thus treated before a stranger.

The waiter now appeared, and Mrs. Maclaurin turned to Mrs. Bernard, and desired her to command the coffee and tea; but, above all things, the hot cakes.

The waiter expressed his regret that the hot cakes could not be procured. The *courrier* had ordered them, but unfortunately there was not any person in the house who understood making them.

"What does he say?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin.

The *dame de compagnie* explained.

"He doesn't mean to say that in a house like this I can't have a muffin, or crumpet, or a Sally Lunn?" and the face of the *gourmande* became crimson with anger. "Was there ever such a thing? Ring for Bordoni: I must hear what he says."

The lady now betrayed such unequivocal symptoms of anger and disappointment, that Lord Fitzwarren looked from her to his friend in mute astonishment; and Lord Alexander Beaulieu, dreading a

scene in the presence of Fitzwarren, became every moment more embarrassed.

The *courrier* now arrived; and Mrs. Maclaurin dictated to her *dame de compagnie* a torrent of reproaches for his not having had the cakes ready, the names and ingredients of which were to be translated into Italian by her.

“Don’t mince matters with him, I desire you. Tell him I think him a most stupid and negligent person, thus to disappoint me.”

Mrs. Bernard commenced the reproof, greatly modifying the terms of it; but before she had half got through her phrase, Mrs. Maclaurin, slapping the table with her hands, until every thing on it was shaken, exclaimed—

“Speak out, woman, as if you were in earnest, and don’t go on as if you were calmly talking to a lord or a lady.”

Bordoni shrugged his shoulders, gesticulated as every Italian does when he wants to explain, declared that he had not only tried every person in the hotel, in order to procure the cakes desired by *sua eccellenza*, but searched the whole town in vain, and lamented that *sua eccellenza* was angry for what was no fault of his.

This speech was translated for the lady, but it by no means mollified her; nor, when no less than half a dozen different kinds of Neapolitan cakes were served, all of which she partook of, did her temper seem restored. She said it was impossible to live in a place where neither muffins, crumpets, nor Sally Luns could be procured, and turning to her future husband, she expressed her determination to leave Naples as soon as ever they were married.

“Whew!” said, or rather whistled, Lord Fitzwarren. “So then, Axy, you, like me, are come to Naples to be spliced, and to this lady?”

Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with a rueful countenance, nodded assent, while the bride elect, assuming a bashful air, affected to cast her eyes down and play with her rings.

“Poor devil!” thought Fitzwarren; “and has it come to this with him? Marry a Gorgon like the one before me? Why, by Jove, if she had the wealth of the Indies, she would be a dear bargain, and with such an infernal temper, too! I suppose poor Axy is driven to it by poverty. Nothing else could make him. If a few hundreds can keep him out of the scrape, I will most readily bestow them on him.”

Lord Fitzwarren now rose to depart, and asked his friend to accompany him to his room. “And so, Axy,” said he, when he

found himself alone with Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "you are going to marry Mrs.—what d'ye call her; I forget her name!"

"Yes, Fitz; such is the case."

"I am a plain-spoken fellow, Axy, and I have known you long enough to say what I think without giving any offence, I hope."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu bowed assent.

"Well, then, I can't fancy that it's for love that you are about to wed; *that*, I think, is out of the question in this case; but if you are going to marry because you are hard up, as many a man before you has been, why all I can say is, that if a few hundreds can keep you from such a wife, they are heartily at your service."

"Thanks, my good fellow. The lady, I am ready to admit, *entre nous*, is not tempting; but she is rich as Cræsus, and therefore I have made up my mind to the thing. Her fortune will console me for the incumbrance attached to it, and I intend to see as little as possible of her when she becomes Lady Alexander Beaulieu. Had my brother behaved more liberally, and given me a decent allowance, I might have been spared from such a *mésalliance*; and he, who has such a lot of ready money, and never spends one-half his income, might easily do so if he liked. He won't much relish the sister-in-law I am about to give him, for he's as proud as Lucifer. But he may blame himself."

"But consider, Axy, if anything were to happen to your brother, what a horrid bore it would be for you to find yourself saddled with such a wife, when you no longer had any occasion for her money!"

"I have considered all that, Fitzy, but be assured I have no chance of ever coming to my brother's fortune. Mountserraf is as sober as a judge, as abstemious as an anchorite, and as careful of his health as an unbeliever in the skill of physicians can be. Then he never hunts, or rides restive horses; and, in fact, he takes such especial care of his person, that I shall live and die a younger brother, so I have determined on sacrificing at the shrine of Plutus, and marrying the rich widow."

"I am sorry for it, for he assured the lady in question has a terrible temper of her own, and that, joined to her other defects, must, in spite of her money, render your life anything rather than comfortable. However, you are the best judge of your own affairs, my dear fellow; and as you have made up your mind, it's no use talking about it. When are you to be married?"

"As soon as I can make the necessary arrangements, which, I

suppose, can be done in two or three days. You, also, I have heard, are to be wedded here?"

"Yes; I expect the Wellerbys here in the course of a week. I wish I could be decently off, to tell you the truth, Axy, for I am no more in love with Livy than you are; but the poor soul is so devilishly fond of me that I can't find it in my heart to throw her over, even if I could do so without laying myself open to the charge of dishonourable conduct towards her; so I'm fairly in for it, and must make the best of it I can."

"Lady Olivia has a temper of her own, I can tell you, Fitz; so take care you do not find yourself hen-pecked for the rest of your days."

"You are wrong, Axy; Livy is as mild as mother's milk, never differs in opinion with me on any subject, and lets me take my own way in everything. Why, I tried to get up a quarrel with her half a dozen times, just to have a decent excuse for crying off or to provoke her to do so; but, Lord bless you! it was all in vain. The poor girl is so in love with me, that if I said black was white, she'd agree to it. Then she dotes on horses. You should see her when I speak of poor Fanny; the tears come to her eyes, and she says 'Ah! how I should have liked that dear animal!' No; I have broken Livy in, I can tell you, and shall always have my own way after marriage, as I have had it before. I wish *you* had as good a chance of being comfortable, Axy."

"Thanks for your good wishes, Fitz. Of one thing be assured, and that is, that if the widow had the temper of a fiend, it should not interfere with my comfort. I intend to see as little of her as it is possible to do, and she must console herself for my absence with the rank which her marriage with me will confer on her, while I must submit as patiently as I can to the ridicule which she cannot fail to draw on my name."

The friends parted for the night, promising to see each other the next morning, each smiling at the weakness of the other.

"Well, I must say," thought Lord Fitzwarren, "that Axy has made what I call a very bad bargain. That Gorgon is not presentable, and will expose him wherever he goes. I didn't think he was so foolish as to marry such a creature. Why, as presumptive heir to a marquisate and a large estate, he might have wedded some rich citizen's daughter in London with lots of money, and without the ugliness or vulgarity of this widow."

"Poor Fitz!" thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "to be taken

in by that plain and artful coquette, Lady Olivia Wellerby! What an ass he must be! She hasn't a *sous*, and has a very bad temper. It's a regular take-in, and *he* is too great a blockhead to get out of the scrape. Well, *I have* been wiser, for I shall at least secure a large fortune, and that, as times go, will be a consolation for any *désagrémens* attached to my marriage. I see beforehand that I must cut and run as soon after I touch the money as I can, for she is such an incorrigible *bête*, that there is no keeping her quiet, even before a stranger, for a single hour. How Fitz will show her up to every one he meets! Well, it can't be helped."

CHAPTER XXXV.

They little know of love who idly deem
 It vanquished when pale jealousy doth vex,
 And indignation, with stern mien, doth seem
 To look disdain, and angry thoughts perplex
 The heart, where erst the treach'rous god did reign
 Ere it had learnt to know the doubts and fears
 That fade the cheek, and fill the heart with pain,
 And steep the sleepless pillow with sad tears—
 For still, e'en still, the tyrant wields his power,
 His slave to wound through many a distant hour.

Mrs. Sydney and her daughter's journey to Milan was a melancholy one. Neither could forget the shock given to their feelings by beholding Strathern as they did, at such an undue hour, and bearing in his dress and countenance the undeniable evidence of having been absent from his home all night. His haggard face, dishevelled hair, and wild look impressed both ladies with the belief that he had just left dissolute companions; and, as this conviction entered their minds, they felt indignant against him, and, ashamed of their own imagined credulity, in having believed that one who was now so fallen could ever have been the high principled and honourable man they had taken him for.

Whether it was a latent, lingering sentiment of affection that still operated on the heart of Louisa Sydney, or her pride that revolted at the idea that other eyes than her own should see her lover, as she last beheld him, who shall decide?—but certain it is that she would have given much to have prevented her mother from witnessing

his degradation ; and so instantaneously had this desire flashed through her mind, that even at the moment that she started and averted her eyes from him in the street, she checked the exclamation of surprise and chagrin that rose to her lips, lest it should reveal the cause of her emotion to her mother, and assumed as composed an aspect as she could. Her precaution was, however, unavailing ; Mrs. Sydney had seen Strathern even before her daughter had caught sight of him, and the flush of indignation that overspread her face, and her suppressed breathing, revealed to her daughter, quite as strongly as words could have done, her anger and disgust.

There is, perhaps, no sentiment more painful to a refined and generous person than that of finding one previously loved and respected, worthless and debased. This unenviable feeling now haunted both mother and daughter. A perfect sympathy existed in their hearts, yet both shrank from giving utterance to its dictates, from a consciousness that it would only tend to embitter the regrets of both.

Louisa Sydney was grateful to her parent for this delicate forbearance, and, actuated no less by gratitude than pride, endeavoured to appear calm, while her heart was tortured. What efforts are women—so often, but falsely termed weak—frequently called upon to make : and at moments, too, when their breasts are wrung by the severest trials ! To enable them to fulfil their destinies, Providence has endued them with pride and delicacy, two qualities that have peculiar influence in feminine natures ; and these, in woman's breast, act as courage does in man's. But who, save one of their own sex, can know how much the exercise of these resources costs them ? The pallid cheek, the quickened pulse, the tearful eye—symptomatic of a wounded heart—are carefully concealed, before the world, beneath the mask of assumed calmness, and only in solitude are the feelings permitted to seek the relief of tears.

How often are those who in public conceal mental anguish with a firmness worthy of a Spartan, accused of being unfeeling, by persons who, could they but behold them in the privacy of their chambers, when the garish world is shut out, would own that women, with all the weakness attributed to them, must have a rare power of endurance, thus, through so many hours, to appear calm ! Louisa Sydney possessed this power, and, while in the presence of her mother, her composure might have imposed on a less deeply-interested companion ; but Mrs. Sydney saw through the veil

beneath which her beloved child endeavoured to shroud her sufferings, and almost loathed him who had occasioned them. The thoughts of both were continually occupied by one subject, but that was a prohibited one between them, and their efforts to maintain a desultory conversation were as painful as they were unsuccessful.

How long and weary does a journey seem undertaken under such circumstances! Scenery that, had their minds not been engrossed by bitter reflections and gloomy anticipations, might have charmed them, was now unheeded. They longed to arrive at their journey's end, though its termination held out no prospect of brighter hours—in short, they wished to escape from themselves, forgetful of the truth of the beautiful lines of Horace—

Patriæ quis exul
Se quoque fugit?

They at length arrived at Milan, but the view of this fine and interesting city, with its magnificent Duomo, failed to banish the sadness that oppressed their spirits. And yet the sight of that beautiful edifice, with its snow-white pinnacles and statues, seen against the bright azure of the unclouded skies, awoke a sentiment of admiration in the breasts of our gentle travellers. It was, however, but of brief duration, for soon came the reflection to Louisa, of how, a short time before, with him who could never more be aught to her, she would have enjoyed the contemplation of that glorious temple; and she turned from it with saddened feelings.

Mrs. Sydney's enjoyment had for many years been only a reflected one from that of her daughter. If Louisa felt pleased and happy, *she* became so; but when her daughter's brow was overcast, and a languid smile played but for a moment over her pale face, the fond mother's became shrouded in gloom, for she saw that the transient smile had only been assumed to disguise the all-absorbing grief that was preying on her heart.

To beguile the hours, and in the hope of averting Louisa's thoughts from the one painful subject that filled them, Mrs. Sydney made an excursion to Monza, where, among the objects that most struck her daughter and herself, was the iron crown that had encircled so many royal heads, and which the Emperor Napoleon had placed with his own hand on his brow.

To how many reflections on the instability of human greatness, and the nothingness of grandeur and power, would this diadem have given rise in a mind like that of Louisa Sydney, had it been

free from the pressure of personal cares that almost overwhelmed it? But now she turned with a listless air from its contemplation, and hardly bestowed a glance on the many sparkling jewels—the gifts of sovereigns to the church—as they were taken from their cases and exposed to her view. The palace of Monza, with its park and fine gardens, she walked pensively through, and her mother's melancholy became increased as she observed the abstraction and indifference with which her daughter viewed objects that would, previously to her late bitter disappointment of the heart, have afforded her the liveliest pleasure.

Their excursion to the Certosa, near Pavia, interested Louisa more. The splendour of this church, which owes its erection to John Galeas Visconti, Duke of Milan, dazzled if it could not delight her; but in her state of mind she was more prone to reflect on the feeling of penitence that led him to offer up this atonement to an offended deity, than on the various and beautiful details which render the edifice one of the most magnificent in the world in its decorations. She thought of the crimes into which a reckless ambition had plunged the proud duke; of an uncle imprisoned that he might seize his possessions; and of the son of that uncle poisoned, after he had treacherously got him into his power. Her memory reverted, too, to Catherine, the wife of Galeas Visconti, and the daughter and sister of the deposed duke, and his poisoned son, who, it is said, urged her husband to erect this temple; and she was reminded that, like Mary of England, Catherine Visconti shared, without repugnance or shame, the dominions wrested from her own father by the very man she wedded.

For a brief space, Louisa Sydney forgot her own sorrow in dwelling on the persons and incidents connected with the Certosa; and when, having viewed the treasures it contains, in the rarest works of art in painting and sculpture, and the finest marbles, oriental alabaster, gold, silver, ivory, *pietro duro*, and bronze, she remembered that Francis I. of France, when taken prisoner at the battle of Pavia, which was fought in the park near the church, requested permission to offer up his prayers in this glorious temple, while yet suffering under the unaccustomed mortification of defeat; she felt that such an example of Christian resignation ought not to be given in vain, and mentally made a vow that *she, too*, would henceforth struggle to bear up against the sadness that was preying on her heart, and, like the defeated monarch, pray for strength to bear her trials. She beheld with interest the deserted dwellings

of the monks, situated behind the cloisters, and which, by their extreme simplicity, afford a remarkable contrast to the richly decorated church. They are twenty-four in number, and stand apart. Each contains two small rooms, with a little garden in front, in which is a fountain and a marble bench, and, though now presenting only a tangled maze of flowers and weeds that in wild luxuriance overspread the ground, leaving no trace of the stiff and formal parterres in which they were once laid out, the vivid green and bright tints of the flowers, and the carols of the birds that have taken possession of them, render these little abodes very tempting to those who, smarting under the disappointments from which few, even of the most fortunate, are exempt, feel a longing desire to steal from the busy world to such secluded spots, there to enjoy quiet, if happiness be denied.

Similar thoughts passed through the minds of mother and daughter, for the trials to which Louisa Sydney had lately been exposed, while wounding her heart, had matured her reason. The world for her had now lost some of its fairest illusions, and she could better comprehend the sorrows her parent had experienced, and more truly sympathise with them, than before she herself had become acquainted with disappointment. Returning to Milan from the Certosa, she once more opened her heart to her mother, spoke of the pain she had endured from the conviction of the unworthiness of him on whom she had bestowed it, and the affectionate gentleness with which she was listened to, and soothed by her fond parent, operated like a healing balm applied to a wound. Clasped in the arms of Mrs. Sydney, her head reposing on the maternal breast, where it had been so often pillowed in infancy, and her ear drinking in the sweet accents addressed to her by one who had been indeed a stricken deer, Louisa felt a calmness steal over her mind, to which, ever since the morning of her departure from Rome, she had been a stranger. Mrs. Sydney did not, as some persons would have done, attempt to reason her daughter out of the passion to which her youthful heart had so wholly surrendered itself. Nor did she speak of the certain influence of time in eradicating misplaced affection, although she hoped much from its salutary power. Such a mode of reasoning she well knew only served to irritate the pain it was meant to subdue; so she tried to comfort her child by sharing, if she could not banish, her regrets; and this system, prompted by her gentle nature, was the most efficacious she could have adopted towards Louisa.

"You saw him, mother, that fatal morning, as we were leaving Rome," said she.

"Yes, dearest, I did."

"How kind, how considerate it was of you not to speak of it! I was then—and indeed ever since until now—too weak, too irritable, to have borne conversing on it. You received his presence at that hour, and, coupled with his dress and whole appearance, as I did—as an irrefragable proof that he had indeed sunk into shameless habits of profligacy? O mother! how it wounds the heart to think that while I, on a sleepless pillow, was shedding the bitter tears that cannot be controlled when the unworthiness of one beloved is discovered, *he*, forgetful of his vows, of my feelings, and of common decency, was passing the hours with that beautiful but degraded being, with whom we beheld him that never-to-be-forgotten night, at the Coliseum, and with whom he afterwards, as if in derision of us, appeared publicly at St. Peter's."

"I have reflected often and deeply on all this, my own Louisa, but I confess that, notwithstanding appearances are so strongly against him, I cannot reconcile them with all that I saw, and I was a close observer of his character and conduct during the months in which he passed so many hours with us. His character in England, too, which, even in the eyes of the cynical Mr. Rhymer, was spotless, accords so little with his either renewing an old, or contracting a new acquaintance with any woman of light conduct, that, in spite of appearances, I cannot divest myself of the notion that he is not the culpable person we suppose him to be."

"But how explain away what we saw, and what others also beheld? We cannot surely doubt the evidence of Mr. Rhymer, any more than that of our own eyes?" said Louisa, becoming animated in her indignation against him, whom she, in her secret heart, would have given millions, had they been hers, to have heard justified.

"Alas! I cannot explain them away," replied Mrs. Sydney. "They are involved in a mystery which I confess I cannot fathom; but though it may be a weakness, and perhaps a reprehensible one, I own that it is soothing to me to dwell on all the good I saw in his nature and character, and to believe that, notwithstanding the appearances which bear so strongly against him, he could not suddenly descend to be so unworthy as these same appearances would imply. I could no longer have faith in the existence of goodness, were I to believe that he was enacting a part during all

the months that he passed in our society. The descent from honourable principles and irreproachable conduct is rarely, if ever, so rapid as his late behaviour would lead one to suppose. He was neither a man of quick impulse, nor of a changeable nature; so, as I cannot at all reconcile his recent acts with his past consistency of conduct, I am willing, for my own peace, as well as for his sake, to give him all the benefit of my most charitable interpretations of that which is, to say the least of it, very suspicious, and to think of him as I knew him, rather than as he has latterly appeared."

"Ah! when, dearest mother, shall I be as considerate, as reasonable, and as charitable as you are?" exclaimed Louisa, pressing her mother's hand to her lips, and secretly pleased that Strathern had still an advocate in her breast. Yet she would not avow, even to herself, that she had a satisfaction in hearing him spoken well of. The heart has its mysteries, which not even its owner can solve, and this was one of them; and, perhaps Louisa Sydney was as unconscious as her mother, why, from this evening, she might date her feelings to be of a less gloomy nature, and her indignation towards Strathern to have become softened.

Many had been the attempts made by Nurse Murray to lead her youthful mistress once more to permit the same confidential conversation with her that had formerly existed. Many were the innuendoes given of the wickedness of men in general, in the hope of their affording an opening to dwell on the superlative degree of it in one of the sex in particular, of whom she entertained the very worst opinion.

"Sure it would relieve her heart were she to open it to me," would the old woman say to herself, when she observed the gloom and sadness of her young lady. "Don't I remember how it used to do me good, many a long year ago, when I had a quarrel with my poor husband, to open my heart to any friend. And to whom could my darling young mistress tell what is troubling her, who would feel it so deeply as I should? Ah! woe's me! she no longer loves or trusts me as she once did, and I do believe she has never forgiven me for having cautioned her against that artful wicked man; although she herself must have discovered something very bad of him indeed, to make her and her mother leave Rome all of a sudden as they did, and refuse to see him the day before they left it. And didn't Thomas, the footman, tell me that, the very morning we were leaving Rome, he saw Mr. Strathern walking towards

his lodgings in the very same clothes he had seen him wear the day before, when he called at our house, and that he looked pale and haggard, as if he hadn't been in bed all night? 'You may be sure, Mrs. Murray, he was about no good,' said Thomas. 'He was gambling, or drinking all night, and when he saw our carriages drive past him, he looked as if struck all of a heap, and then began running as fast as he could after us, as if to stop us. He staggered, too, when he was running, so I am sure he must have been tipsy. The gentry blame poor servants, Mrs. Murray,' says Thomas to me, 'for taking a drop too much, but they themselves don't mind turning night into day, and drinking bottle after bottle. It's easy to be seen there's one law for the masters, and another for servants.' Well, I'm glad the marriage was broken off, for what a terrible thing it would be, to be sure, to have my sweet young lady married to a gambler, or a drunkard, and have the houses turned topsy-turvy! But who'd have thought that one who appeared so steady and genteel could be addicted to drinking? Well, I dare say, this was what Mrs. Bloxham meant when she shook her head so gravely, and said she knew what she knew. Yes, this must be it. But how mighty confidential my young lady and her mother are grown all of a sudden! Never asunder, except when they are in bed; always such good friends, and never the least mill or coolness between them. Not but what, I must own, if ever there was, it was always on my young mistress's side, for I never saw such a doting mother in my life; but it was a pleasure, ay, and a pride too, for me to see that Miss Sydney had more confidence in me than in her own mother, and so she once had, but woe's me, that's now all over; and if I begin to speak about the wickedness of mankind, she stops me short, and changes the subject, so I don't know how ever to get her to have the same trust in me she had before. God forgive me if it's a sin! but it *does* vex me to the heart to see all her love and liking turn on her mother, and so changed as she is to me."

Such were the cogitations in which old Nurse Murray indulged many a time and oft, when her young lady had hastily got through the duties of her toilette, and dismissed her from attendance. Her pride and affection both wounded, she envied Mrs. Sydney for thus engrossing all her daughter's time and attention; and although invariably treated with kindness by her youthful mistress, it no longer satisfied her, after having previously been permitted to take liberties, which Miss Sydney, having seen the impropriety of, was determined

no more to allow. How little did either mother or daughter suspect what was passing in their old servant's mind! And yet Murray's was not naturally a bad heart. She had only been spoilt by too much indulgence, and the result was, that she was jealous of the affection and good understanding established between Mrs. Sydney and her daughter as she had formerly been of the attachment between her young lady and Strathern.

Having seen all that was most interesting in Milan and its vicinity, Mrs. Sydney and Louisa set out for the Lake of Como, where they determined to pass some months. The beauty of the scenery, and the tranquillity and repose of that enchanting spot, delighted them both. They would spend many hours every day on the water, and Mrs. Sydney having observed its efficacious effect on the health of her beloved child, often permitted her, accompanied by her female attendant, to indulge the pleasure of boating, when her own avocations or wishes detained her at home.

The boat they had engaged for their sojourn at Como was moored on the lake at the bottom of the garden of their villa, from the windows of which she could behold Louisa gliding over the smooth and limpid water, which, like a vast mirror, reflected on its calm bosom the blue and cloudless skies above it. The fond mother observed with pleasure that this amusement invigorated without fatiguing her daughter, hence she never opposed her wishes to enjoy it, when the fineness of the weather enabled the boatmen to give her the assurance that none of those sudden storms, so prevalent at Como, were to be dreaded. Reclining beneath the awning, which screened her from the too fervid rays of the sun, and with a favourite volume of poems in her hand, Louisa passed whole hours on the lake. Oftentimes would she close the book, and, looking on the Elysium that surrounded her, her thoughts would fly to *him*, from whom they were seldom long absent, verifying the truth of the poet's line, that when endeavouring *not* to think of him, he was never forgotten. "How *he* would have admired this beautiful place," would she say to herself, "and with *him* what a paradise should I think it!" And then she would sigh, and blame herself for thus allowing him so continually to occupy her thoughts. "Yet," would she say, "I do but as my dear good mother does: I think of him only as he was, or at least as I believed him to be, when I yielded him my whole heart, and thought our destinies were indissolubly united. This is not, I hope, a crime; for, while I turn with abhorrence from the sensualist and libertine I have, alas! lately

had but too much reason to consider him to be, I have a pleasure, a melancholy one though it be, in remembering what I believed him."

One day, when the rays of the sun were more than usually felt on the water, and not a breath of air agitated its glassy surface, Louisa, oppressed by the heat, desired the boatmen to leave the centre of the lake, and to row the boat under the shade of some magnificent willows that stretched their giant limbs and verdant foliage far over the waters, from a pleasure-ground where she had often previously sought a refuge from the sunbeams. She was perusing the book with her when the tones of a well-known voice reached her ear. She started, turned her head in the direction whence the voice came, and beheld emerging from the thicket of flowering shrubs that had hitherto concealed them, Strathern and the lady with whom she had seen him on the never-to-be-forgotten night at the Coliseum, advancing towards the spot near to which her boat rested. Trembling with emotion, she ordered the boatmen instantly to leave the place. They, believing that they were acting in compliance with her wishes, were impelling it towards the direction in which those she so much wished to avoid had paused to admire the view.

"No—not there—not there!" cried Miss Sydney; "go back as swiftly as you can."

The boatmen began to explain something about the unsafety of rowing in the direction to which she pointed, but she would not hear their reasons, and, again commanding them to proceed in a contrary direction, they unwillingly obeyed her. The boat had not advanced far from the shore when it struck on a concealed rock, and with such force that it was thrown on its side, and all in it were precipitated into the water. Louisa Sydney rose to the surface for a moment, but only to be engulfed again. One of the boatmen seized her female attendant, believing that it was the young lady he was rescuing, and holding her with one hand endeavoured to make for the shore, while the other, thinking only of his own safety, kept aloof, and swam to the nearest point of land. Once more, half suffocated, and nearly unconscious, Louisa was borne to the surface of the water, and was then sinking, never more to see the light, when she was grasped by a vigorous hand, and felt herself clasped round the waist and drawn to the shore. Breathless and exhausted from the violence of his exertions, her rescuer from death sunk nearly as lifeless as his

precious burthen when he had placed her on land. The female attendant, who had now recovered from her immersion in the water, having been more quickly snatched from it than Miss Sydney, assisted to restore that young lady to life, and Lady Delmington, who had witnessed the whole event, most actively aided her.

Strathern—for it was no other, who had saved Louisa's life at the risk of his own—now arose from the earth, on which, faint and exhausted, he had fallen, when he placed her on a bank, and with intense anxiety bent over her. He had beheld the accident, ignorant that the object still dearest to him on earth was the person whose danger he witnessed; but, urged by humanity, he threw off his coat, and, plunging into the water, swam to the rescue of the being whose white drapery still floated on the water. It was only when he now looked on her, to all appearance lifeless, that he recognised the person he had saved: for, her bonnet having fallen off when he grasped her, her long tresses, loosened from the comb that confined them, had concealed her face. The late inexplicable and unkind conduct of Miss Sydney, with all the chagrin it had occasioned him, was in a moment forgotten. He remembered only that the woman he adored was cold and inanimate before him; that life, if not quite extinct, fluttered so feebly at her heart that it might soon cease to beat altogether; and, almost frantic with alarm, he knelt on the ground by her side, and chafed her feet and hands to restore warmth, while Lady Delmington applied her *flacon* of salts to her nostrils, and the French attendant wrung the water from her long and silken tresses.

At length Louisa languidly opened her eyes, and the first object they rested upon was Strathern. A slight colour tinged her cheeks, and a faint smile parted her pale lips. Strathern pressed one of the small hands he was chafing to his lips, and tears of joy and thankfulness filled his eyes at her being restored to life. Yes, that manly nature that had but a few minutes before prompted him to brave death, to rescue a fellow-creature, was now subdued into all a woman's tenderness, and the tears flowed down his face. Again Louisa opened her eyes; and this proof of his affection so touched her, that her lids closed; but, before they did so, Strathern discovered a look of softness and pity that thrilled his heart. Lady Delmington, the only person present who possessed any calmness, had despatched one of the boatmen to the inn for a carriage and restoratives. Both now arrived, and, some *sal volatile* having

been administered to Louisa, she was able to move her head and limbs, and to speak.

“It is to you I owe my life, is it not?” said she to Strathern.

“Heaven be praised I was near to save you!” replied he.

A smile, such as angels might be supposed to give, played around her mouth, and her eyes expressed the thanks her lips attempted not to utter. She raised one hand to her brow, Strathern still detaining the other in his, as if to collect her thoughts, but made no effort to withdraw the hand he held; and he, filled with anxiety lest she should again renounce him, accepted this tacit permission to retain her hand as a favourable omen.

Again Lady Delmington held the *flacon* of salts to her nostrils, and, as if aroused from a reverie by their pungency, Louisa Sydney opened her eyes, and turning them on the beautiful woman who was, with the gentlest care, attending on her, shrank back as if a serpent had stung her, and, rapidly withdrawing her hand from Strathern, called her attendant, and desired to be taken to her home. When Strathern attempted to raise her in his arms, she tried to extricate herself; and he felt with dismay, while he bore her to the carriage in waiting, that she recoiled from his touch, and that even when he placed her in it she averted her eyes, while coldly expressing a few words of regret at having given him so much trouble. Of the services of Lady Delmington she made no acknowledgment; and, her attendant having taken her seat by her side, she peremptorily refused to allow Strathern to walk by the side of the carriage, to see her home, and parted from him with as formal a bow of the head as if they were total strangers; while he, shocked and grieved at what he imagined to be her heartless conduct, felt stung to the quick.

A thousand conflicting emotions agitated the heart of Louisa Sydney as the carriage drove to the villa of her mother. Had she been snatched from a watery grave, and by *him*, too, only to find him still devoted to that lovely but guilty being, whose touch she had shrunk from as pollution! And *he*, hardened in sin, and lost to all shame, had permitted his mistress to approach her, to touch her person, which ought to have been sacred in his eyes! O, monstrous! He had presumed, too, to press her hand to his lips in the presence of that worthless woman; and *she*, weak and fond, had not withdrawn her hand from his, until she saw the beautiful but hateful face of her who had caused all the misery she had endured! She felt herself insulted, degraded. Better had it been that she had never been

rescued from the watery grave into which she was sinking, than to owe her life to him, and to come in contact with his paramour.

Such were the bitter thoughts that filled the mind of Louisa Sydney, instead of gratitude to the Almighty for her preservation; but the pangs of love and jealousy had, for the time, conquered her better nature

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The noblest minds, whate'er men say,
Will most profoundly feel love's sway,
While those with levity imbued,
Engross'd by self, ne'er let intrude
An image in the heartless breast,
That might disturb its peaceful rest.
Love, entered once in noble hearts,
Will stay, though youth, sweet youth, departs;
And when with age it fades away,
How slow and gentle its decay!
Replaced by friendship fond and true,
Hearts b'lieve it still the love they knew.

When Strathern had in some degree recovered from the first shock of beholding the unlooked-for departure of Mrs. Sydney and his affianced wife from Rome, and had ascertained that not a line of explanation, not a word of adieu, had been left for him by them, he determined on seeking a relief from his cares in devoting his time to his poor friend, Lord Delmington. Gladly would he have remained in the privacy of his own chamber, to indulge the reflections that oppressed his mind in the painful position in which he found himself, had not a sense of duty towards the suffering husband, and of pity towards the youthful and interesting wife, induced him to stifle his own sorrow, and to try to be of use to them.

He retraced his steps to their hotel, where he had the satisfaction of finding Lord Delmington better: and, after much persuasion, he engaged Lady Delmington to seek the repose of which she stood in so much need, promising that he would not leave his friend until she came to take her place by the sick couch. Here he had full time to think over the events of the last few days, but was furnished with no clue to unravel the mystery in which the cause of the conduct of Mrs. and Miss Sydney was involved.

In the darkened room, where no sound, save the breathings of his poor friend, and the quick throbbings of his own agitated heart, broke the silence that reigned, he passed the long hours. More than once during that day did a groan burst from Strathern, as the memory of happiness so lately enjoyed presented itself to his mind, contrasted with his present wretchedness and despair, and he only became sensible of having allowed this demonstration of his feelings to escape, when Lord Delmington, opening his languid eyes, looked at him with an expression of the deepest gratitude for what he believed to originate in Strathern's anxiety for him, or extended his hand to press that of his friend, in recognition of his watchful care. Little did the invalid imagine the grief that was preying on the heart of him who sat beside his couch, or that *he* was the innocent cause of the circumstances that led to it. Often did the anonymous letter, warning him of the caprice and suspicious disposition of Louisa Sydney, which he had received some weeks before, recur to his memory during that day. Had not the charges contained in it—charges which he had then perused with disdain at their supposed falsehood—been by her recent conduct fully justified? With this painful conviction forced upon him, why could he not tear her image from his breast? why not banish her from his thoughts? were questions that often suggested themselves to his mind during the weary hours of that interminable day. How frequently have similar ones occurred to the thoughts of lovers when writhing under the first sharp pangs of disappointed affection; and the resolution to do so, like that vainly formed by Strathern, has been found to be more easily determined on than executed, as aching hearts have owned, for truly has the poet said, that lovers can “do all things but forget.”

That day was the most wretched that Strathern had ever passed; and it was only when Lady Delmington returned to take his place by the bedside of her husband, refreshed and invigorated by the hours of repose she had enjoyed, that a gleam of something like satisfaction cheered his heart at having enabled her to seek this blessing. When he observed the smile of ineffable affection with which the youthful wife was welcomed by her husband, as her hand was pressed to his feverish lips, he rejoiced that he had been there to relieve her for some hours from her charge; and, when the doctor came in, and pronounced Lord Delmington to be much better, his friend felt repaid for the sacrifice of his own cares

which he had made in devoting himself to watching by his sick couch.

Day after day did Strathern continue his attention to Lord Delmington, whose convalescence, though slow, continued gradually to progress, until he was at length enabled to leave his chamber and be taken into the air. Strathern's interest in the youthful couple increased as he daily witnessed their devoted attachment to each other, and their gratitude to him for his friendship. The physicians recommended that the invalid should leave Rome, and, instead of proceeding at once to Naples, as had been his original intention, go towards the north of Italy, where the greater coolness of the temperature would be more conducive to the restoration of his health.

When Strathern proposed leaving them, both Lord and Lady Delmington so earnestly pressed him to accompany them to the Lake of Como, whither they intended directing their route, that he, having now no motive for his movements, yielded an assent to their entreaties, and set out from Rome with them, a medical man having been added to their party, to be in readiness lest any relapse might ensue to Lord Delmington. They had only arrived at Como the evening previous to the encounter which had so nearly proved fatal to Louisa Sydney; and having, at Lord Delmington's request, walked out, that his wife might enjoy the fresh air, and view a villa to be let on the borders of the lake, Strathern and his fair companion were exploring its pleasure ground when Louisa had recognised his voice, and, in her desire to avoid him, had insisted on the boatmen rowing in the direction where a rock occasioned the accident described in the last chapter.

Had Strathern believed himself cured of the wound that still rankled in his heart, the interview with Louisa would have proved the fallacy of his supposition. But he indulged in no such illusion. He was well aware that his attachment, however mortified his feelings had been, and still were, by the unaccountable conduct of the object of his affection, and her mother, had known no diminution; and when he viewed Louisa to all appearance lifeless, he felt that if she did not recover, existence would henceforth be insupportable to him. Her faint smile on recognising him, her permitting him to retain her hand in his after she had the power of withdrawing it, had transported him with joy, by proving that, whatever might have been the cause that had induced her to desert him, it was not personal dislike. How then account for the sudden change in her manner? Was it, that she was only kind while yet her reason

had hardly regained sufficient power to govern her actions, and that with returning consciousness came the determination to hold no intercourse with him? Wounded as he was, when he reflected on all this, as he beheld the carriage in which he had placed her drive from his view, she having insisted that he should not walk by its side, as he had proposed, he nevertheless did not, could not, feel as wretched as, previously to this unlooked-for meeting, he had done, for he no longer believed himself disliked or forgotten; and with this consolation a thousand vague hopes sprang up in his heart justifying the poet who has said that

“Love will hope where reason would despair.”

As he stood with folded arms, gazing at the carriage that contained Louisa Sydney, wholly forgetful that his clothes were dripping wet, and of the presence of Lady Delmington, that lady, with the prescience in affairs of the heart said to be a peculiar attribute of her sex of every age, immediately surmised the state of his.

“Come, Mr. Strathern, you must not expose yourself to cold,” said she. “Let us return at once to the hotel, that you may change your dress.”

Strathern started, as if from a reverie, and was about to offer his dripping arm to his fair companion, when, recollecting himself, he assented to her proposal, and they walked together towards the hotel.

“What a beautiful person!” observed Lady Delmington. “I never beheld any one so exquisitely handsome.”

Strathern felt gratified, for nothing is more pleasing to men than to listen to the praises of the object of their passion from one of her own sex.

“You say nothing,” resumed Lady Delmington, “but I am sure you must agree with me in opinion.”

“She is beautiful, most beautiful,” replied Strathern.

“I thought her angelic,” said Lady Delmington, “when she first opened her eyes and smiled, but.....”

And here the speaker paused, for she did not wish to finish the phrase that rose to her lips, which would have implied her notice of the stern and cold aspect and manner subsequently assumed by the young lady in question. Strathern was sensible of the meaning of the break in her sentence, and thankful for it, too; for however angry at the marked change in Louisa Sydney’s manner, he could ill bear hearing it commented on by another; though he was more

amoyed at the want of common civility, not to say gratitude, evinced by Louisa to Lady Delmington, who had lavished such kindness and attention on her during her insensibility, and after it, than at the treatment he had experienced himself. His fair companion and he walked on for some time in silence, Lady Delmington not wishing to interrupt the train of thought passing in his mind, and he so totally abstracted as to be hardly conscious of her presence, when they met the physician who had been despatched by Lord Delmington, on hearing of the accident, to offer his services to the young lady rescued from a watery grave. The boatman sent for a carriage had told all whom he had encountered of the accident that had occurred, and a servant having incautiously repeated the news to Lord Delmington, he instantly became alarmed lest it might have been his wife who had ventured on the lake, and so narrowly escaped drowning. The servant, however, was able to remove his fears, as he had learnt that it was a young lady some time a resident at Como to whom the accident had occurred, and he instantly sent off Dr. Piteairn, and a servant with a medicine-chest and various restoratives, to administer succour to the stranger. The doctor had missed the road, and directed his steps to another villa, so that he arrived too late to be of any use to Miss Sydney.

"Bless my soul, my lady!" said the Scotsman—"why, your ladyship is perfectly wet. This is very dangerous, and may occasion disagreeable results."

And now for the first time did Strathern observe that Lady Delmington's dress was nearly as wet as his own, in consequence of her close contact with the streaming drapery of Miss Sydney, whose dripping head reposed on her breast, while he and the female attendant were endeavouring to restore suspended animation by friction. A pang shot through his heart as he witnessed this proof of Lady Delmington's kindness, and recalled the total want of notice taken of it on the part of her on whom it had been lavished.

"Your ladyship must positively take a few drops of this cordial," said Dr. Piteairn. "Twill do you good, and prevent the cold from striking inwardly. I have known many serious cases of catarrh and pulmonary attacks to have originated in colds caught by damp clothes."

"I am not apprehensive of any disagreeable results, doctor, I assure you," replied Lady Delmington; "for I have walked, since I got wet, sufficiently quick to warm me. My only desire is

to conceal from Lord Delmington that I have been at all wet, for his fears would magnify the danger, and make him ill and nervous."

"Weel, weel—I'll try and smuggle your ledyship into the hotel by the back entrance, so that you can change your dress before his lordship sees you; but you must indeed obleege my by swallowing a few drops of this cordial. And Mr. Strathern must do the same."

"Would it not be advisable for the doctor to proceed to the young lady's residence, and offer her his services?" said Lady Delmington, ever thoughtful for others.

"Certainly," replied Strathern, who was himself on the point of suggesting the propriety of this step. "Do, dear doctor, go at once to Mrs. Sydney's villa, where your presence and skill may be of the greatest advantage," said Strathern.

"Weel, I'll just go; but I must recommend her ledyship to have recourse to a warm bath when she enters the hotel, and after that to get into a bed well warmed. It is absolutely necessary, I assure you; and I advise you, Mr. Strathern, to adopt the same precaution."

So saying, Dr. Pitcairn hurried off, attended by the servant with the medicine-chest, and restoratives, in the direction of Mrs. Sydney's villa, which had been pointed out to him by Strathern, who had noted the route taken by the carriage that contained her lovely daughter. Catarrhs and pulmonary attacks, pronounced by Dr. Pitcairn to be the general consequences of wet clothes, haunted the mind of Strathern; but truth compels us to state that, however well disposed towards the fair and interesting lady who walked by his side, his fears all pointed to, and were engrossed by the possible danger of the object of his affection. So delicate as Louisa was, to what might not her immersion in the water, and remaining so long in wet clothes, expose her?

Lady Delmington guessed that his thoughts were with the lovely girl he had so lately rescued from death, and her lively imagination had already composed a little romance, which was not far from the truth, in which they figured as lovers separated by the cruelty of a parent, or some other of the untoward incidents prevalent in novels, the recollection of which had caused the remarkable change of aspect and manner she had noticed in the young lady.

"Poor Mr. Strathern," thought she, "it is no wonder that he should be so low-spirited. Who could help loving one so beau-

tiful as she is, yet I fear she is less amiable than lovely, for an amiable woman would have at least uttered a few words of thanks to me, or have acknowledged my presence by a bow: while *she* averted her eyes from me with a disdainful expression, for which I can in no way account."

Lady Delmington and Strathern, in pursuance of the plan of Dr. Pitcairn, entered the hotel by the back entrance, and having as rapidly as possible changed their clothes, presented themselves before the anxious husband, and relieved his fears. Neither felt any evil consequences from their wet clothes, but Lady Delmington had to relate all the particulars of the accident in reply to the questions of her lord, as Strathern was too much engrossed by his own thoughts to enter into the particulars of it. Dr. Pitcairn soon after entered, and so contracted were his brows, and so solemn his aspect, that Strathern, on beholding him, concluded that Miss Sydney was in the utmost danger.

"Good God! Doctor," exclaimed he, "did you indeed find your fears verified? I see by your countenance that she is in danger."

"Weel, I maun say, I believe the young lady is in danger."

"Oh! why, then, did you leave her?"

"For a very good reason, I was not allowed to see her. No sooner had I sent in my card, and said that I had been requested by Mr. Strathern to call and offer my services,—because you see, my lord, it would not be becoming that a man of my profession should go, unsolecited, to attend any patient, so I just thought it right to make use of Mr. Strathern's name, when, after waiting a considerable time in a small room off the hall, an old woman, who I believe was a housekeeper, came and told me that Mrs. Sydney sent her compliments, and was obliged for my attention, but begged to decline my services. I declare I never was so treated before, and Mrs. Sydney will probably repent it when too late, for where, at Como, can she find an English practitioner? and if she entrusts her daughter's life to one of those Italian quacks who call themselves doctors, I would not give a penny for the young lady's life."

"Let us hope that your services were only declined because the young lady did not stand in need of them," said Lady Delmington, observing the alarm pictured in Strathern's face at the doctor's concluding phrase.

"Not stand in need of them, my lady! Why, how could she escape the consequences resulting from being all but drowned? Recollect the quantity of water she must have swallowed, the sense

of suffocation endured, the catarrhs, pulmonary attacks, and rheumatisms, to which such an appalling accident must have rendered her liable, and then, who can doubt how much she stands in need of good medical advice and care! Believe me, my lady, they will repent not having accepted my proffered services when it will be too late, but they will have no one to blame but themselves."

Strathern felt convinced that Dr. Pitcairn's attendance had been declined, owing to his having been sent by *him*; and this new proof of the pertinacity with which Mrs. and Miss Sydney adhered to their resolution of not only avoiding him, but refusing to profit by the opinion of an English physician in a case requiring it so much, because recommended by him, mortified and grieved him. Yet, in the midst of the painful feelings occasioned by this new proof of the continued desire to break off all communication with him, Strathern could not banish from his mind the one gleam of brightness, slight and evanescent though it had been, which cheered the dark reflections for the present, and the gloomy forebodings for the future, that filled his troubled breast. The smile with which Louisa had regarded him when first restored to consciousness, the confiding gentleness with which she had resigned her hand to his, for the first few minutes after she had recognised him, bore evidence that he still retained a place in her affections, however misrepresentation—for to nought else could he attribute the change in her conduct towards him—might have operated to induce her to abandon him. The joy of having rescued her from death, even though the life he had saved might never contribute to bless his own, was a source of consolation, of which not even her ingratitude for the gift could deprive him, and he passed a less gloomy evening and a more calm night than he had known since the day that Mrs. Sydney and Louisa had left Rome.

"They probably received anonymous letters against me," thought Strathern, as he lay in his bed the following morning, reflecting over all the late events. "The same hand that traced the warning to me against Louisa may have taken the same means of destroying her confidence in me, and with greater success. I loved too well to attend even for a moment to the concealed slanderers who would poison my mind against her. Ah! why did Louisa not love me sufficiently to spurn the accusation; or, at least, to expose them to me! Yes; it must have been so. But truth must at last triumph, and a day will come when Louisa will discover that I was not, am not, unworthy of her affection."

There was comfort even in this reflection: for, in making it, he retraced his own conduct since he had entered into London life, up to the present period, and he found no act in it which, if exposed to the scrutiny of his enemies—and that he had such he now for the first time began to think—he need blush for, or that could furnish them with the power of injuring him. How few men of his age—or indeed of any age—could indulge retrospection with so little self-reproach! and that this was something for which he had cause to be thankful Strathern felt in his heart, and was grateful to the Almighty for. When he had left his chamber, he sent a servant belonging to the inn with a note to Mrs. Sydney, requesting to be informed of the health of her daughter. He added an entreaty to be made acquainted with the cause of her repudiation of his attentions and avoidance of his acquaintance, stating that, although he had a right to demand an explanation, in order that he might justify himself from any unfounded charge, he preferred soliciting it as a favour at the hands of one whose good opinion he most highly valued, and whose altered feelings towards him he had deeply deplored. This letter despatched, Strathern felt as if his future destiny depended on its result. Mrs. Sydney could not, in common justice, refuse the explanation he had sought, and, when accorded to him, he could refute every charge, and satisfy her that he had never been guilty of aught to forfeit her esteem, or her daughter's affection. He would not confide this letter to be conveyed by any of his own servants, for his pride and delicacy revolted from *their* being made acquainted with the vicinity of Mrs. Sydney, until he was permitted to see her. He paced the road that led to her abode in a state of agitation and impatience he had never previously experienced, and, before his messenger could have reached half the route, reproached him for his dilatoriness in not having already returned. When he at length saw him at a distance, he walked rapidly to meet him, holding out his hand to receive the expected answer to his letter, almost maddened by the delay occasioned by the messenger searching in his pocket, out of which, having first drawn a comb, a soiled pocket-handkerchief, an old glove, a ball of twine, and some nails, he at last extracted a letter, which bore evident marks of its contact with the said articles. Strathern snatched it from his hand, but how great was his shock on discovering that, instead of the anticipated letter from Mrs. Sydney, he grasped his own!

“How is this?” demanded he, his cheek flushing with disappointment and anger.

"The signoras Inglesés left the villa early this morning, signor, and will return to it no more."

Strathern turned from the man to conceal his emotion; and, such was its extent, that he remained absent from the hotel for some hours, in order that its traces might have time to disappear ere he presented himself before Lord and Lady Delmington. The hopes that had sprung up in his breast the previous evening were now wholly crushed; and, as he tore his own letter into shreds and scattered them to the air, he vowed that never again would he sue to the justice or pity of those who were so obstinately bent on avoiding him, and of refusing him an opportunity of vindicating himself. Had Mrs. Sydney perused his letter, and then disdainfully returned it, Strathern could not have been more indignant than he felt at the sudden departure of her and her daughter from Como.

"They shall henceforth be released from any importunities of mine," said he; and he set his teeth close, and compressed his lips, as men are wont to do when forming some determination that it has cost them a pang to decide on. "I will not have the appearance of a persecutor who pursues them wherever they go. No; whatever it may cost my feelings, I will in future avoid them as anxiously as they do me, for it is now quite clear to me that they have no wish for my justification."

When he returned to the hotel, Lady Delmington informed him that she had sent a servant to inquire after the health of Miss Sydney, and that he had brought back intelligence that she had left Como early that morning. Strathern felt embarrassed; and this sensation was increased when Lady Delmington added that the servant left in charge of the villa had said that the move was so sudden a one that the previous morning no intention of it had been named. "This move proves, however," continued she, observing the annoyance her news inflicted on her hearer, "that the health of the young lady could have sustained no serious injury by the danger from which you yesterday rescued her, and I am exceedingly glad of it."

Strathern replied not, and the conversation took another turn, but Lady Delmington felt convinced that her former surmises relative to the attachment of her husband's friend to Miss Sydney were well founded, and pitied him for the depression of spirits under which he laboured. When she communicated her opinion to her husband, from whom she had no thought concealed, he said, "I have but a poor opinion of the heart or head of any girl who could

trifle with the affection of such a man as Strathern, who is the very soul of honour, kindness, and generosity."

"But we know not, dearest, what misrepresentations may have led to the estrangement between the lovers; for that lovers they have been I cannot doubt," observed Lady Delmington.

"I have no patience with a woman who *could* believe evil of the man she loved, or who would not at once candidly inform him of the accusations made against him, and so give him the opportunity of justifying himself. I know Strathern well, and could pledge my life that he is incapable of aught that could—or, at least, that ought to lose him the heart of the woman who had ever accepted his attentions: and this same Miss Sydney, whose life he yesterday saved, must have indeed a cold one, to have, as you told me, prohibited his accompanying her home yesterday, and to have left Como to-day without so much as a line of thanks."

"We cannot tell, dearest, what her reasons may be; for what appears to us so inexplicable..."

"Ah! there you are, Mary—a true woman—ready to defend *your* sex at the expense of *mine*. I do believe that there is a sort of freemasonry among women, and particularly in affairs of the heart, that leads them always to take the side of their own sex."

"I am sure that I, dearest, am more inclined to adopt your opinion than to advocate my own," replied Lady Delmington, stooping down to kiss her husband's brow.

"So you say, Mary, but, somehow or other, you always manage to bring me round to yours, and I dare say in half an hour would persuade me that this cold-hearted Miss Sydney, who has changed my friend Strathern from being one of the most cheerful and agreeable men in the world, to a sighing, pensive lover, for which I owe her no good will, is a most charming and faultless person, who torments him all for his good. But would you, Mary, have so treated me?"

"Ah! there's the rub!"

"No, you would not, I can answer for it. I know that dear good kind little heart of yours too well to suspect the possibility of such a thing. You would not listen to any charge against me; or, if forced on you, you would soon tell me every word of it, adding, 'I don't believe a single syllable of the story.'"

"Yes, my own kind husband, I am sure I should; but then consider that I am wholly inexperienced, and have seen nothing of the

world, while Miss Sydney has the air of a very grand and stately lady. You should have seen how she drew herself up when she declined letting Mr. Strathern walk by the side of her carriage."

"A fig for her grandeur and stateliness! I hate your stately women, who are always thinking of their dignity, when they should be thinking of the poor devils whose heads they have turned. No, my Mary; I like only those dear, soft, and gentle creatures, who, like you, never think of self, and by this total abnegation of it, win every man who has a true heart, and a sense of honour, to take care of them. I wish I could reason Strathern out of this misplaced passion, for it will only embitter his life, and he is too good to be made the victim of a proud and stately coquette."

"Do not make the attempt, dearest. Had you seen the tenderness beaming in her eyes when she first fixed them upon him, when restored to consciousness, you would be convinced, as I am, that she still loves him, and perhaps they may yet be reconciled and restored to happiness."

"But how the deuce can they, if she *will* run away at the very time when, having saved her life, one might think the ice around her heart might be thawed?"

Here the entrance of Strathern stopped further remark on the subject, though Lord Delmington's opinion was left unchanged.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Absence, where true love doth reign,
Is a source of care and pain;
Yet, as distance doth divide,
It can soften wrath and pride;
And excuses for the dear
(Never thought of when they're near)
Find within the too fond breast,
By Jealousy's sharp pangs oppress'd ;
For the urchin Love doth joy
All his cunning to employ,
Glossing o'er each act and fault
That keen agony had wrought,
'Till the heart beneath his sway
Feels its anger melt away.

The surprise and shock occasioned to Mrs. Sydney on hearing of the accident which had occurred to her daughter may well be

imagined. The boatman who conveyed the intelligence, though cautioned not to relate the extent of the danger to which Miss Sydney had been exposed, was too much excited by it, as well as by the courage and intrepidity of her rescuer, to attend to the injunction given him by Strathern, so he entered into a minute detail of the whole event. Fortunately for Mrs. Sydney, the arrival of her daughter ere he had quite narrated what had nearly been a most tragical scene, reassured the terrified mother, who, pressing her beloved child to her breast, wept tears of joy and thankfulness to the Almighty for her safety. A warm bed and some restoratives soon produced the happiest result on the chilled frame of Louisa; but it was evident to her anxious parent that the mind of her daughter had not recovered its usual equanimity, and that a state of excitement existed for which not even her recent danger could account. Unwilling to fatigue her by questions until she had perfectly recovered from the effect of her late dangerous accident, Mrs. Sydney remained by her couch, ejaculating blessings on the rescuer of her Louisa.

“Never will I let a day pass without offering my prayers for *him*,” said the fond mother, “without whose aid I might now have been childless. O! my own Louisa, I shudder to think on the peril to which you were exposed! But did you not inquire his name? Did you not tell him to come here, that I might lighten my oppressed heart by pouring forth a portion of the vast debt of gratitude which I owe him?”

“No, mother; and earnestly do I pray that we may neither of us ever again behold him. You look astonished; but, when I tell you that it was Strathern who saved me, you will not wonder that I should say this!”

“Strathern!” reiterated Mrs. Sydney. “Now, then, my blessed child, I forgive him all the chagrin he has caused me—all the sleepless nights he has occasioned; and I will pray that he may see the error of his ways, and repent. But how did he appear? What line of conduct did he adopt when you were restored to consciousness?”

“Would you believe it, dearest mother? he had the courage, the effrontery, to exhibit the same interest and look of affection that would have been natural when I regarded him as my affianced husband, but which, in our present position, was insulting.”

“How strange!—and yet he may have repented his infatuation and sin, and, if a true penitent, Louisa, he is at least entitled to our

commiseration. The service he has rendered softens my anger, and I would fain thank, though we can no longer reward him."

"Spare your pity; *he* is unworthy of it. Oh! mother, you know not the degradation to which your child has been subjected;" and the pale cheek of Louisa became flushed with feelings of wounded delicacy and indignation. "He was not alone—that woman with whom we saw him at the Coliseum was his companion; she assisted to restore suspended animation to my frame;" and the proud and sensitive girl shrank at the recollection that her head had been pillowed on the bosom of one to come in contact with whom she considered the deepest degradation. "Yes, mother, he suffered *her* to remain in my presence, to touch my person, and to shock me with the display of an interest that it was humiliating to experience from one like her! *He* was even so lost to shame and delicacy as to lavish the most tender marks of affection on me before that woman—nay, he proposed to walk by the side of the carriage to see me home! Was such unblushing effrontery ever heard of?"

"It was wrong, very wrong, I must admit, to let her remain near you; but recollect, my precious child, that, in the hurry of spirits and anxiety of such a time, he could not be expected to possess the presence of mind and sense of propriety which, under less painful and trying circumstances, might be looked for. He could not, also, dispense with the aid which this person afforded in restoring you to life, and therefore we must overlook that which would certainly otherwise be highly culpable."

"I cannot regard his conduct in as favourable a light as you do," replied Louisa, sighing deeply as she spoke, unconscious how far the severity with which she viewed it was occasioned by the pangs of jealousy which tortured her heart.

"He did not premeditatedly intrude this woman into your presence, dearest," said Mrs Sydney; "recollect this, for it mitigates his offence. He was, I conclude, walking with her when he beheld your danger, and rescued you from death; and when he bore you to the shore, to all appearance lifeless, as the boatman asserted, he was, I dare say, but too happy to have the assistance of a woman to restore suspended animation to this dear frame;" and the doting mother stooped down to her daughter's couch, and pressed her fondly to her breast.

"We must leave Como, mother, and that as soon as possible; I cannot consent to remain where *he* is. Bear with me: I know that it is weak and childish to feel this strong, this indomitable desire

to avoid him, but I cannot control it, and you will, I know, indulge your wayward child, and take her from a place that has now become unbearable to her."

"Certainly, dearest: we will leave Como, if you so earnestly desire it, and I will arrange that we may depart in a few days."

"Talk not of a few days, mother; every hour that sees me here will appear an age, so great is my impatience to be gone. Let us depart to-morrow, at daylight: do, dearest mother, comply with this request, for I shall not feel a moment's peace until we are far away from this."

When had Mrs. Sydney ever been known to refuse compliance with the desires of her daughter? and never was she less likely to decline gratifying them than at the present time, when her child, always inexpressibly dear to her, was now, if possible, still more so, when restored to her from the brink of death. She felt more than ever how wholly her happiness—nay, her very existence itself—depended on that of her child. She immediately gave the necessary instructions to her servants to have everything ready for departure the following morning at an early hour; and Louisa, assured of this, felt more composed than she had been since the accident that had so nearly deprived her of life. Conscious that, on first opening her eyes, and feeling that she had been saved by Strathern, the affection for him that had, in spite of all her efforts to subdue it, still kept its place in her breast, had been suffered to reveal itself, her pride and delicacy revolted at the notion that *he* had seen that he was still dear to her. *He*, the companion of *one*, the very thought of whom tortured her with all the pangs of jealousy and indignation—would he not remember the soft expression of the eyes that met his, and the smile that greeted him when returning consciousness had revealed the secret of her heart, and on comparing both with the angry scorn that marked her glances when, a short time after, she discovered the presence of his mistress, would he not attribute her altered manner to the true cause—jealousy and wounded pride?

These were the questions that the proud and sensitive girl demanded of herself, as she lay on her couch, writhing under the angry feelings that filled her breast. What had she best do to prove to him that appearances were erroneous, and to convince him that he was now only an object of dislike and contempt to her? She would immediately leave Como, before he could have an opportunity of making any appeal to her mother, or even an inquiry after

her own health; which last she felt assured he would not fail to do, after the anxiety he had betrayed about her that day. Yes, she would convince him of her perfect indifference, and efface the impression which her involuntary kindness might have produced.

Thus, while hope was cheering the heart of Strathern, based on the soft expression of the beautiful eyes of Louisa when they met his, and on the sweet smile that parted her lips when she noted the anxiety with which he bent over her, she was regretting and reproaching herself for having bestowed this brief moment of happiness on him, and laying plans for destroying its impression. How little did he dream that, while he was intent on soliciting an explanation, which his conscience told him he had a right to demand, and hoping that a reconciliation, which would restore him to the bliss for which he sighed, would be the result, the object on whom he still doted was intent on placing herself out of his reach, and recalled to mind, with shame and anger, the marks, slight though they were, of tenderness towards him, that had involuntarily escaped her!

Mrs. Sydney and her daughter were many miles distant from Como ere the messenger who bore Strathern's letter reached the villa she had occupied. How differently might affairs have terminated, had their departure been postponed even for a few days; for, though his letter would not, in all probability, have produced the effect he desired—his asking an explanation while supposed to be the companion of her who was believed to be his mistress, being, in the eyes of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, an aggravation of his offence—they could not in the end fail to hear that his travelling companions were Lord and Lady Delmington, and this fact would have at once cleared up their evil thoughts of him, and vindicated his conduct. Had they received the garrulous physician of Lord Delmington, *he* would soon have revealed the truth; for, proud of being the medical attendant of the future Marquis of Roehampton, he never missed any opportunity of introducing “his lordship” and “her ladyship” into his discourse, and would soon have made them acquainted with every particular relating to the travellers.

Unhappily, pride, the old leaven which still bore such a preponderating influence in the character of Louisa Sydney as to quell, if it could not eradicate, the affection which had taken so strong a root in her heart, dictated the line of conduct she had decided on adopting, and marred the chance afforded of seeing her lover

justified, and having their mutual happiness restored. Yet, though anxious to depart from Como, she could not leave its umbrageous shades, its beautiful scenery, and its verdant glades, among which she had so loved to wander, nor the glassy lake, on whose tranquil bosom she had so often watched the sun's decline, and which had been so near becoming her grave, without deep emotion. That scenery, that lake, were now for ever associated in her mind with him who had risked his life to save hers: and, although indignant and jealous, who can say how much of the regret she experienced on leaving Como might be caused by the reflection that in quitting it she left *him* behind? However this might be, her spirits, which during the bright sunshine of the day had been rather more animated than usual—and she was proud of letting her mother see this—sank when the shades of evening descended around, and she no longer felt capable of the exertion that had hitherto carried her through the effort of appearing cheerful. Her countenance being shrouded in darkness, and safe from the scrutiny of her fond parent, she now suffered the tears so long checked to steal down her cheeks, and yielded to the melancholy reflections that in these hours of silence and gloom would make themselves heard. She almost wished that she had not left Como, and blamed herself for having urged her mother to that step, now that it was too late to repent it; yet, when her imagination pictured Strathern roaming in the spots through which she had so often roved, with that beautiful but erring woman leaning on his arm, or seated at evening by his side, addressing to her those looks and words once directed solely to herself, the poisoned arrow of jealousy rankled at her heart, and it was only by a strong effort that she could suppress the sighs and groans that rose from her tortured breast. How she longed to be alone, freed from all restraint, that she might relieve her overburthened feelings by weeping!—for she dreaded even to apply her handkerchief to wipe away the tears that were chasing each other down her cheeks, lest her mother should become aware of them.

Once or twice Mrs. Sydney spoke to her, but, unable to sustain a conversation without betraying her emotion, Louisa feigned sleep, and her fond parent remained immoveable lest she might disturb her slumbers. But too well did her swollen lids and pale cheeks attest the truth when they halted for the night, and Mrs. Sydney with an aching heart marked these proofs of sorrow in her child. The repast served to them was removed untasted, and, fatigued and saddened, both sought their pillows at an early hour; to in

dulge in solitude those painful reflections which rendered conversation irksome, if not impossible.

When they met at breakfast, next morning, Mrs. Sydney said, "Now, my precious child, it is for you to decide where we shall direct our course."

"Wherever you please, dearest mother; anywhere but where we are likely to meet *him*."

"I think it will be best for us to proceed at once to England, and pass the summer at home. The tranquillity of dear Sydney Park, with its noble old trees, and fresh verdure, will be pleasant to us after so long a sojourn in Italy, which, with all its attractions, can show no glades or lawns like our own. It seems long, very long, too, since I visited the graves of those dear ones—never forgotten—where I shall one day take my last earthly rest."

"Would to Heaven, mother, that I were sleeping with them!" exclaimed Louisa, passionately, "for I long to be 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'"

"And would you leave me alone on earth?" demanded Mrs. Sydney reproachfully—"me, who—when solely smitten by the hand of affliction, and tempted to pray for death to re-unite me to him who made the happiness of my existence—quelled my selfish wishes, and learned to bear the heavy load of life for your sake, Louisa, then incapable of feeling the effort I made, and for the sake of my blessed son, doomed to be afterwards torn from me by relentless death?"

"Forgive me, mother—forgive your selfish child. I, too, will learn to submit, and patiently wait until the Almighty sees fit to call me hence. Bear with me, until I have acquired the resignation for which I will pray. I was too, too happy—too proud of *him*—and the discovery of his unworthiness has shattered so many bright hopes, that it will, I fear, be long ere I recover the fortitude of which you, dearest mother, have given me so fine an example, and which you have a right to expect in me. Yes, let us go to England, and in the tranquil shades of Sydney Park be everything to each other. I can now better sympathize in your regrets, mother, for I too have known sorrow; but you have a consolation denied to me—*those* whom you mourn died worthy of your love. No bitterness can mingle in the tears you shed for their loss, while I"—and here a passionate burst of tears impeded her utterance.

* * * * *

Mrs. Sydney and her daughter proceeded by easy journeys to England.

“Let us avoid London, mother, for I could not bear to find myself in its noise and turmoil in my present state of mind,” said Louisa, as they journeyed towards their native land.

Travelling, hitherto an exciting and interesting pleasure to Miss Sydney, always producing an unusual exhilaration of spirits, had now lost all charms for her. Anxious to draw her thoughts from the one painful subject that engrossed them, her mother proposed to visit the noble antiquities in the south of France on their route, and directed their *courrier* to proceed to Nismes and Arles. But even the beautiful and celebrated *Maison carrée* and theatre at Nismes failed to interest Louisa, who, previously to her disappointment of the heart, would have duly appreciated both these fine specimens of Roman taste and grandeur: but if she now looked at them with any interest, it was because they reminded her of the brevity of life, and the nothingness of human beings, as contrasted with the works of their hands, which outlive for centuries and centuries the frail mortals who constructed them. Seeing how little power the sight of objects, which formerly would have highly gratified her daughter to behold, now possessed to draw her from her regrets, Mrs. Sydney abandoned her project of proceeding to Arles, and pursued the direct route to Paris. The travellers halted but two days to refresh themselves in that gay capital, and were, perhaps, the only ladies who ever left it without furnishing themselves with any of those articles of female gear for the perfection of which Paris has long held an unquestioned supremacy over every other city in Europe. But what cared Louisa Sydney now for dress? There was no one whom she wished to please, and she no longer felt that gratification, often enjoyed by the young and beautiful, even when no lover exists whose tastes they wish to study, of seeing themselves adorned. No, she positively turned from her mirror, dissatisfied with that face and form which could not secure the fidelity of him she had so fondly loved, and lost faith in those charms, the powers of which *she* only could doubt.

Arrived at Calais, and shown into the same sitting-room which they had occupied when they last landed from England, how many painful thoughts filled Louisa's mind! Cheerful and happy then, the world presented nothing but bright and smiling prospects before her. Possessed of all that could render life agreeable, she had not a care or a wish ungratified: while now, though still in the possession of all that she then owned, the want of one good, since acquired, rendered the others insufficient to her happiness. What

to her was wealth, beauty, and health, without the love that had changed the whole current of her existence from a smooth and tranquil stream into a wild and gushing river—that engulfed all feelings in the one blissful one, of loving and being loved! Only the bitterness of love now remained. She could not chase the image of him to whom she had been affianced from her heart; but while it reigned there, in spite of her reason, her volition, and her pride, the torturing recollection that she could never more respect him so loved, and that he had deceived her, and preferred the society of a wanton to hers, never for a moment left her memory. If she could but forget that, “such things were, and were most sweet,” as mutual affection—or at least the believing in them—of happy hours enjoyed, and still happier ones anticipated, in lives to be passed together, she might yet learn to resume the peace of mind that was hers when last she sat in the room she was now in. She glanced around at the pictures on the walls, and on the furniture; every thing was unchanged, and presented so precisely the same aspect as when she last looked on them, that she could have fancied that only a few days, instead of two years, had elapsed since then. But *she*—oh! how was she changed!

The travellers’ book was brought for them to enter their names, and, having done so, Louisa listlessly turned over the pages. Many were the acquaintances whose signatures she recognised, and at length her eye fell on the well-known one of Strathern. Close to it, and in a very minute hand, which, however, she saw at a glance was his, she perused two lines in Italian, signifying that “he left his native land with a heart that ne’er had owned the power of love, and that joyed in its freedom.” She read and re-read the lines, and a gleam of joy passed through her heart, at the confirmation which they afforded of the truth of the asseveration he had so often made of his never having loved before he knew her. For a brief space she forgot, in the pleasure which the perusal of these lines afforded her, all that had occurred to preclude Strathern from ever more being aught to her than a stranger; but soon came the bitter recollection, and as she turned over the page inscribed with his name, she breathed a wish that she could as easily turn over a new leaf in her memory, and forget the events of the last few weeks, which had made such a fatal breach in her happiness.

On going on board the packet next morning, the first person Mrs. Sydney encountered was one of her oldest and most valued friends,

Sir Charles Effingham. He took a seat on deck, by her side, and entered into conversation with her and Louisa, delighted to meet them, after so long an absence. In the course of it, he made inquiries about the English at Rome the preceding winter.

"Ah! the Wellerbys were there," observed he, "and as usual, I suppose, husband-hunting. What young men had you there?"

Mrs. Sydney named all but Strathern, for she feared to excite painful memories in the breast of her child by pronouncing his name.

"But was not Strathern at Rome?" asked Sir Charles Effingham.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Sydney.

"Then, how came you, fair lady, to pass him over? Surely among all the young men, *he* must have been distinguished for his various fine qualities, personal and mental. Strathern is a very remarkable young man, I assure you. I have known him from his boyhood, and consider him to be the most gifted and high-principled person among the whole circle of my youthful friends. He left England without ever having been suspected of a single folly, and yet the prudence which this steady conduct implies has not prevented him from being esteemed one of the most open-hearted and generous fellows breathing."

"He is certainly a very superior person in appearance, manners, and accomplishments," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"Appearance, manners, and accomplishments!" repeated Sir Charles Effingham, opening his eyes to their utmost extent, and elevating his eyebrows. "Why, my dear lady, these are his least merits. Strathern possesses the most solid and sterling qualities, with the nicest sense of honour. But I see you were only slightly acquainted with him. Had you known him as I have done, you would be warm in his praise as I am. I am not one of those old crabbed fellows who believe that men have deteriorated in modern days, and who look with indifference on the young men of the age. I take a deep interest in the rising generation, and see, with satisfaction, the young men of it, who not only love, but are sure to serve their country in its senate, as well as by fulfilling their duties as landlords and country gentlemen."

Why did Louisa Sydney's pale cheek assume a rosy hue, and her ears drink in with delight the warm eulogiums of Strathern? Was the love he had inspired her with still alive and vigorous as ever in her breast, or was it only the smouldering ashes of the former fire that, fanned by the commendations on her lover, sent forth a

bright but transient flame? She turned her head aside, to conceal her emotion, and, fixing her eyes on the waves over which the vessel was gliding, breathed a wish that the sea might not long divide her from him, whom, though she might not see, she yet desired should inhabit the same land as she did.

“I should like to know,” thought she, “that he was fulfilling his duties in his own country, and justifying the good opinion of his friends, although he now never can be aught to me. In England, too, the salutary curb of public opinion would preclude him from the association which, in a foreign land, he does not blush to indulge. Yes, I wish he were in England, for it would give me pleasure to read of his earning distinction, though I am not to share it, and that his life was a useful and honourable one, though it can never more brighten or bless mine. O, Strathern! how many blissful hopes have you shattered to the earth! How have you dimmed a future once so smiling!”

Mrs. Sydney, believing her daughter to be in one of those fits of abstraction into which of late she not unfrequently plunged, asked Sir Charles Effingham, in a low tone of voice, if Strathern’s moral character was unimpeachable?

“More so than any young man I know. Public rumour, my good lady, flies rapidly, and soon makes the world acquainted with the follies and failings of those who take a prominent position in it, however secretly their indulgence in them may be. I never heard the breath of censure or scandal busy with Strathern’s name. No gallantries in fashionable life, no sins in private; I have even heard some of his less scrupulous contemporaries call him prudish and straight-laced, because he would not join them in dinners given at Greenwich and Richmond, to ladies more remarkable for the display of their persons in the ballets at the Italian Opera, than for their modesty when off the boards, or in the *petits soupers* given to those same *figurantes*, which, if fame speaks truly, emulate those of the Orleans Regency in France in all save the wit which is said to have illumined those celebrated orgies.”

Not a word of this dialogue escaped the ears of Louisa, and she listened to it with a strange pleasure. That a man who, without any engagement of the heart, was so scrupulous in his avoidance of female society he could not respect, should, when affianced to the object of his choice, be so lost to all sense of propriety and decorum as to appear in public as the protector of a woman whose acquaintance he dared not own to them, or whose very name he

would not mention even to Mr. Rhymmer, seemed more incomprehensible than ever; and yet that he had done so she could not doubt—her own eyes had beheld the painful, humiliating fact, and again the spirits of Louisa drooped, and her bosom sent forth one of those deep sighs that of late frequently escaped it. Mrs. Sydney felt an inexpressible satisfaction in hearing Sir Charles Effingham, of whose good sense, knowledge of the world, and sincerity, she could not entertain a doubt, confirm all the good impressions of Strathern formerly imprinted on her mind. If left to her own cool and dispassionate judgment, she would have at once acquainted Strathern of her having seen him at the Coliseum with the strange lady, and so have given him an opportunity of justifying himself, if he could do so; and if this was impossible, she would, at least, have the consolation of knowing that she had done her duty both as a mother and a friend. But Mrs. Sydney, doatingly fond of her only child, was unfortunately wholly governed by *her* wishes, and jealousy had taken too strong a hold of Louisa to permit her to view her lover's conduct through any medium save its own jaundiced and distorted one, so he was condemned unheard. Mrs. Sydney had often regretted not having followed the dictates of her own mind at Rome by a frank avowal of what she and her daughter had seen; but never did she so much regret it as now, when her old friend, Sir Charles Effingham, had revived her former good opinion of Strathern, and made her almost doubt the evidence of her eyes. “Would that I had been more firm,” thought she; and so she had often previously thought on matters of much less importance, for she had the good sense to discern her own yielding weakness to the opinions of her daughter, though not the firmness to withstand them. “My poor child,” thought Mrs. Sydney, “is punished for my error. I ought to have been firm, and should have resisted her wishes in a point where my own reason told me I was right.” And this excellent but too yielding woman exonerated her daughter from all blame for her wilfulness, while taking herself severely to task for her weakness.

“There are the white cliffs of Dover,” exclaimed Sir Charles Effingham. “I give you joy, ladies, on your return to your native land. I am glad to see it again, though only three months absent from it—for people may say what they will about better climates, and all the other advantages of foreign countries—I have never seen any to compare with our own, and prefer its fogs and cloudy skies to the clear air and blue ones even of sunny Italy.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Marriage, the gravest act in all man's life,
 The bond of peace, or chain of endless strife,
 That gives the colour to each future year,
 And gilds with happiness, or turns to sear
 The span allotted to him here below.
 Till Death has summoned him from hence to go—
 How strange that some, without one serious thought,
 A state will enter with such import fraught,
 Intent some sordid, selfish end to gain,
 They madly rush to Hymen's sacred fane,
 Profane the altar, mock its solemn laws,
 The love of gold the sole excuse or cause.

Three days after Mrs. Maclaurin's arrival at Naples, she was, according to newspaper parlance, led to the hymeneal altar by Lord Alexander Beaulieu, attended by Lord Fitzwarren. Hardened as the feelings of the bridegroom were, he winced a little when, arrived at the embassy, he noticed the glances of astonishment exchanged between the minister, his secretary, and one of the *attachés*, when they beheld the bride elect. Mrs. Maclaurin, notwithstanding the advice of her future *caro sposo*, was determined to do honour to the nuptials by wearing a splendid dress on the occasion. It consisted of an under robe of white satin, over which she wore a splendid tunic of point-lace, with a veil of the same costly material. A *parure* of magnificent pearls, and a wreath of orange-flowers, put on *malgré* the reiterated advice of Mademoiselle Justine, completed her costume; and never had her plainness, not to say ugliness, been more conspicuous than in this splendid dress, the whiteness and purity of which formed so striking a contrast with her coarse, red face, neck, and arms. Lord Fitzwarren, who lent her his arm, could not resist winking at the secretary and *attaché*, old acquaintances of his, as he drew their attention towards the lady, who affected all the airs of a timid girl, but, unfortunately, so much overacted her part, as to add considerably to the ridiculousness of her appearance.

"Mrs. Maclaurin, Lord Ayrshire," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, presenting his future bride to the English minister, who bowed lowly.

"I am very glad to make your lordship's acquaintance," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, "though I am so fluttered and agitated, as is natural to a person in my position, that I must beg you to make allowance for my shyness."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu bit his lip, and muttered a curse on her between his teeth.

"We surely are not to be married *here!*" resumed the lady. "Have you no chapel fitted up for occasions like the present? for being married in a drawing-room, does not, to my thinking, seem like a real ceremony."

"I regret, madam, that we have no chapel in the embassy. Nevertheless, the ceremony performed by a clergyman of the Church of England in this room is perfectly legal."

"Give me my smelling-bottle, Mrs. Bernard, for I feel quite overcome. Let met have my fan too."

"I am very sorry, madam, but I have not brought either," replied the *dame de compagnie*, looking very much alarmed.

"Not brought either! Why what could you have been thinking about? You are the most stupid woman in the world not to have guessed, that if one ever wanted a smelling-bottle and a fan, it would be on such a trying occasion as going to be married."

Again Lord Alexander Beaulieu bit his lip and changed colour. He had wished that Mrs. Bernard, who really looked like a gentlewoman, should pass as a friend, and not as the humble companion of Mrs. Maclaurin, thinking that it gave more respectability to his future wife; but the ill-breeding and vulgarity of Mrs. Maclaurin defeated his wish, and revealed the dependant position of her timid *dame de compagnie*.

"You may think that because I have 'Mrs.' tacked to my name, I need not be so alarmed at being married," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, addressing herself to Lord Fitzwarren, with whom, during the last two days, she had become perfectly at her ease.

"Why, one *might* think so," replied the peer, "but there are some things one never gets used to, and the marriage ceremony is, I suppose, one of them."

"You don't understand me, my lord; the fact is, that although I have been once married before, it was just like not being married at all, for Mr. Maclaurin. . ."

Here Lord Alexander Beaulieu cut short her speech by reminding her that the clergyman was ready.

"Oh, dear, I hope I shant' faint, but I really feel all no how," said

the bride elect, as she tottered towards a table, arranged as a substitute for an altar, and the ceremony commenced. It was a curious sight, and might furnish matter for grave reflection, to see how little the pair at the altar, and those that surrounded them, with the exception of the clergyman and Mrs. Bernard, were impressed with the solemnity of the service that was to unite for ever the destinies of two beings wholly dissimilar. Lord Alexander Beaulieu thought only of the wealth which this ceremony would insure him, and the lady of the title and station to which it would raise her. She felt no love for him whom she was vowing to love, honour, and obey, her vanity alone prompting her desire for the marriage. Lords Ayrshire and Fitzwarren, with the secretary and *attaché*, thought only of the absurdity of the plain and vulgar woman who was being metamorphosed into Lady Alexander Beaulieu, and how dearly bought her wealth must be when it entailed the necessity of being encumbered with herself into the bargain.

The clergyman, struck by the affectation and folly so apparent in the bride, as well as by the ill-concealed indifference of the bridegroom, reflected on the little chance for happiness such a union presented, and pronounced the words that were to bind them indissolubly to each other with more than usual solemnity, while Mrs. Bernard, who had not been present at any marriage since her own, felt her eyes moisten as she heard the same words uttered that united her to a husband whose affection and virtues could never be effaced from her memory, although he had long been consigned to the grave. She remembered with what heartfelt devotion she had pronounced the vows now so lightly pledged by another, and how faithfully she had kept them. The whole scene in the village church, where she had been baptized as well as married, was brought fresh to her mind by the words of the ritual, never since heard. The parents who blessed, the friends who congratulated, the grey-headed pastor who united her to the only man she had ever loved, and, above all, the dear face of her bridegroom, beaming with affection for her, seemed once more brought before her.

The conclusion of the ceremony, and the moving about and speaking of those who were present, aroused her from the reverie into which she had fallen, and the coarse voice of the bride, demanding whether she was not asleep, reminded her that she was far, far from the tranquil scene her memory had so faithfully pictured, a stranger in a foreign land, a dependant on a harsh and unkind mistress, who made her feel all the bitterness of dependance,

and a poor, forlorn widow, with nothing of past happiness left but its memory.

“Why, what has happened to you?” demanded the bride, looking angrily at her *dame de compagnie*.

“I beg your pardon, madam,” said Mrs. Bernard, intending to offer some excuse for her abstraction.

“Be so good as to remember that I am now a lady of title, and therefore I expect to be called my lady, or your ladyship.”

How Lord Alexander Beaulieu’s cheek reddened as he heard this speech, and noted that not *his* ear alone had listened to it!

“Permit me to offer your *ladyship* my congratulations,” said Lord Ayrshire; and the bridegroom fancied that the minister maliciously laid an emphasis on the word *ladyship*.

“I thank your lordship very much, and hope you will come and dine with my lord and me to-day?”

Again the bridegroom bit his lip.

“I regret exceedingly that it is not in my power to accept your ladyship’s flattering invitation on so happy an occasion, but an engagement of long standing precludes it.”

“Perhaps these gentlemen,” said the bride, turning to the secretary and *attaché*, “will favour me with their company?”

Lord Alexander Beaulieu positively longed to beat her, and betrayed his anger by looks, though he did not give it utterance. The secretary and *attaché*, much to the bridegroom’s relief, pleaded a prior engagement; but the lady, “on hospitable thoughts intent,” extended her invitation to the clergyman. Lord Alexander Beaulieu now lost patience, and seizing his bride’s arm somewhat *brusquely*, led her from the room before the clergyman had quite concluded his grave and cold refusal to accept her invitation. She paused however, on reaching the door, and, turning to the reverend gentleman, presented him with a gold snuff-box, filled with coins of the same precious metal.

“Accept this, sir,” said she, “in token of my gratitude for the service you have rendered me. All I require in return is that you will have the joy-bells rang in honour of the ceremony;” and so saying, she departed, and entered her carriage, which was surrounded by a crowd of gaping *lazzaroni*, attracted by the white and silver favours with which her servants were plentifully decked.

“Throw them some silver, and don’t be sparing of it,” said the bride to her courier, “and tell them to drink to the health of Lord and Lady Alexander Beaulieu.”

Accustomed to act for herself, the bride was quite forgetful that, in thus bestowing her gifts and issuing her orders, she was placing her husband in a subaltern and somewhat awkward position. *He* felt it, and betrayed that he did so, by an increased coldness of demeanour towards his obtuse bride, which bore evidence of his more than indifference, to his positive dislike to her.

"Well, here we are, man and wife," said she, as, seated in the carriage by her husband's side, Lord Fitzwarren and Mrs. Bernard occupying the seat opposite to her, they drove to the Grand Bretagne. "I don't know whether it is the flurry of spirits I was in during the ceremony, or not, but I declare I never felt so hungry in my life. What a bore it is to feel half-famished, with the certainty of finding nothing at the hotel that I like, and on one's wedding day too! I'm determined never to move a single post again as long as I live, without a cook, who can make sally-lunns, crumpets, and muffins, as well as cook beefsteaks and tender mutton-chops. Would you believe it, my lord, that when I sent down a message from my room yesterday morning, to desire that something very nice should be prepared for my breakfast, and was quite peckish at the thoughts of what it might be, they sent me up a kind of clear brown jelly, with little bits of white meat stuck inside it, and when I asked what it was they said it was an *aspic*. 'What! eat a viper!' said I. 'Sure that was the name of the one that killed the Egyptian Queen that I heard Colonel Fairfax reading about.'"

Here a burst of laughter, which he could not suppress, revealed Lord Fitzwarren's enjoyment of the bride's ignorance and *naïveté*; but she, not the least discomposed by his merriment, said, "Your lordship may laugh as much as you please, but I assure you they called the dish an *aspic*, and the very thought of it disgusted me so much that I couldn't eat a morsel. I have heard of the French eating frogs, and thought that bad enough, but that people could be found who would eat vipers, I never expected to see. A penny for your thoughts, my lord (turning to her husband). Why, what has come to you? One would suppose that you were coming from a funeral, instead of a wedding, and your own wedding into the bargain."

Before Lord Alexander Beaulieu could reply to this observation, they arrived at the hotel, at the same moment that a courier, covered with dust, and on a panting steed, white with foam, galloped to the door.

"Does Milord Beaulieu lodge here?" demanded the courier,

and on being answered in the affirmative, "Lead me to his presence immediately," said he.

"Here is his lordship," observed Durnford, the valet of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as his master stepped from the carriage, and the courier, making a low bow, and assuming a grave aspect, drew from his breast a packet sealed with black, which he handed to the bridegroom, whose face became pale as marble and whose hand trembled as he tore the packet open.

The bride unceremoniously ran to his side, and, placing her red arm on his shoulder, said, "Between man and wife there are no secrets, my lord, so I will read the letter with you."

Already had his eye, quick as lightning, glanced over the contents. His cheek became flushed, his eyes sparkled, and his lips trembled. He pushed his bride from him, with a gesture of undisguised hatred, and rapidly ascended the stairs, followed by the bridal party, who found him seated, and gasping for breath.

"What in the world ails you?" demanded the newly-made wife. "Haven't I a right to know? Am I not your lawful wife, and as such entitled to be made acquainted with everything that concerns you?"

"Spare me, madam, or you will drive me mad! Do, Fitzwarren, get that woman to be quiet;" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu, having uttered these words, scowled most ferociously at his astonished bride.

"What is the matter, my dear Axy?" asked Lord Fitzwarren.

"Oh, that cursed courier! had he but arrived an hour sooner! I could kill him, and myself too, for this fatal delay. Pity me, Fitzwarren! Mountserrat is dead, yes, positively dead; and had this news reached me an hour—a little hour sooner, I should have been saved from——Oh! it is enough to render me a raving maniac!" and he struck his brow, and writhed in agony.

"What does he mean, my lord?" demanded the bride of Lord Fitzwarren, with a look of utter astonishment.

"Do not speak to him now," said the peer, good-naturedly. "He is grieved and agitated, and we had better leave him alone until he recovers his self-possession."

"It may be very well for every one else to leave him, but it's my duty as a wife, and I will fulfil it, to stay with him;" and she walked up to her lord, and attempted to kiss his brow.

"Leave me, leave me!" exclaimed he. "Would that I had never seen you! I must start for England at once."

“What, on our wedding-day and all! Wouldn’t it do as well to go to-morrow, for sure your going a little sooner or later can’t make much difference, as your brother is dead; and now, for I forgot it before, I wish you joy on being a marquis and coming into a great fortin; and am not I a lucky woman to be so soon made a marchioness?”

The countenance of her husband as he listened to this unfeeling speech expressed the most deadly hatred; not that he felt any sorrow for the death of his only brother; his sole regret, and it was keen and poignant, was that the intelligence of this event had not reached him in time to have stopped his ill-starred nuptials; and, goaded almost to madness at the thought that now, in the possession of high rank and unbounded wealth, he found himself saddled with a woman whom he loathed, and to whom he considered the extension of his title as nothing short of a profanation. Strange to say, even in the course of a few minutes, all his ideas and feelings had undergone a perfect transformation; and he who, two hours previously, would have smiled in derision at what he would then have termed an aristocratic prejudice, namely, the dislike to wed a woman for gold, when no other means offered for acquiring it, now shrank with a disgust that he attempted not to conceal from her who had been the victim of his cupidity. What, *he*, the Marquis of Mountserratt, lord of the princely domains and feudal castle that descended to him from a long line of noble ancestors, was he to be pointed at by the finger of Scorn as the husband of a low-born and incurably vulgar woman, who never could open her lips without exposing herself and him? Already he was an altered man. The pride of rank and station had replaced the recklessness which poverty had engrafted on his character, and the consciousness of his vast possessions caused him to reflect with wonder how he could ever have condescended to wed the odious Irishwoman for what he now considered her paltry dowry. The straits to which pecuniary embarrassments had often driven him—the temporising with stern creditors, the appeals to his brother, and the borrowing from careless friends, whose undisguised reluctance to meet his solicitations had rendered their assistance, even when accorded, most humiliating—were all forgotten in the excitement of his new position, the only alloy to the happiness of which consisted in the homely and vulgar woman on whom he had conferred his title. Oh! why had envious fortune thrown this one drop of gall into the cup of joy that would otherwise have intoxicated him? Why had not the news of

his elevation to rank and wealth reached him ere he had taken the fatal step which poisoned the enjoyment of both! Such were the reflections that passed through the mind of the Marquis of Mountserrats, with compressed lips and frowning brows, he sat on the chair into which he had thrown himself on entering the room. "I will never see this odious woman more," thought he. "I will leave her in peaceful possession of her own fortune, but she shall never touch a shilling of mine, never enter any of my houses."

"You'll come to breakfast, won't you, my lord marquis!" said the bride, again approaching her moody husband.

"Fitzwarren, my good fellow, do make her understand that I wish to be left alone."

Before, however, his lordship could interpose, in obedience to his friend's request, the bride had laid her hand on the arm of her *caro sposo*, and repeated her request that he would accompany her to breakfast:—"Consider, my dear lord marquis, that it is our wedding-day, and that I have not been used to remain so long fasting. I feel quite weak and sick, I assure you, for want of my breakfast: and, if we are obliged to set off to England immediately, as you say, I shall never be equal to the journey, unless I try to recover my strength by food. Don't let your grief make you forget my health."

"Touch me not, approach me not, hateful woman!" exclaimed the marquis, rising from his chair, and pushing her with violence from him. "Know that I detest, that I loathe you! Were you less obtuse, less stupid and vulgar than you are, I might be saved the annoyance of telling you the bitter truths I can no longer suppress."

"My dear fellow, spare her," said Lord Fitzwarren—"do, pray," his good-nature shocked by the violence of his friend.

"Detest *me!*—loathe *me!*" repeated the bride, panic-struck. "Am I in a dream!—or is he mad!" and she looked around for a confirmation to her questions.

"Yes; I repeat it. I abhor you—the very sight of you is odious to me!" and the marquis accompanied the words by a glance of such intense hatred, as convinced her even more than them that he spoke the truth.

"And you tell me this on our wedding-day, when I would have given you all I possess!" exclaimed she, her face becoming pale, and her eyes flashing with anger. "You haven't the heart of a man in you: you have a stone in your breast instead. Oh! you

base deceiver!—you who so often swore that you loved me, and for myself alone! Yet, somehow, my heart told me you did not really love me. I had my misgivings; but your artful tongue, and the persuasions of Justin, mastered my doubts; and now, almost in the very hour I have become your wife, you are not ashamed to throw off the mask, and to avow your hatred of me, at whose hands you have received only kindness and generosity. You may be a lord and a marquis ten times over, but you are no gentleman, and I tell you so.” And here the lady burst into a flood of tears.

“I am glad you now know me,” said Lord Mountserratt, “because you will the less regret the separation which will this day take place between us. I shall leave Naples in an hour, and will never more consent to see you. You are full mistress of your fortune and of your actions. Let me advise you to remain on the continent, where your gross vulgarity will be less observed or commented on than in England. I tell you now, once for all, that never shall you enter a house of mine, or be acknowledged by me.”

“You can’t prevent me from being your wife, and a marchioness into the bargain, and that’s some comfort,” observed the lady, spitefully. “You thought you had taken me in; but, you see, it is the bitter bit, for I’m Marchioness of Mountserratt in spite of your teeth, and you can’t prevent my going to England, where I certainly will go and appear everywhere, if only to vex you.”

“Come, Fitzwarren, I want to speak to you,” said the marquis, rising to leave the room.

“I hope, Lord Fitzwarren, that you will dine with me to-day, though your friend the marquis is taking himself off?” and the deserted bride glanced most scornfully at her husband, who was leaving the room. “I’m now quite ready for breakfast,” resumed she, “and shall eat it with no less good an appetite for being rid of a false-hearted scamp, who married me for my money, and who, having unexpectedly come into a large fortune of his own, is not ashamed to insult and desert the woman who showed him such kindness and generosity. I dare say it’s all for the better; and, as all I ever wished for was to be a real lady, and to have a grand title, and have got it, I may laugh at the man who has gained nothing by all his deceit but a wife whom he acknowledges he hates, but whose marriage with him he can’t break.”

“It was too bad of you, Axy, to cut up the poor woman in that manner,” observed Lord Fitzwarren to his friend, when he found himself *tête à tête* with him. “You might have decamped, and

written a cold but civil letter from the first post, stating your intention of never seeing her again."

"I was only cruel to be kind, Fitz," replied the marquis. "Had I done what you say, she would have thought it necessary to lament our separation, and perhaps have taken it into her head to follow me. As it is, I have so completely mortified her vanity, that she, I dare say, at this moment hates me as cordially as I do her, and is not sorry to be rid of me. I know women well, Fitz, and be assured I have been wise in converting the love of this Gorgon into dislike, which will be much less troublesome and odious to me. You must lend me enough money to take me to England, Fitz, and I will repay it into your banker's in London. It would not do for the Marquis of Mountserratt to borrow money from the woman he is running away from;" and the unprincipled *roué* drew himself up with an air of as much dignity as if he had nothing to reproach himself with. "Ah, Fitz!" resumed he, "how cursedly unfortunate it was that I did not listen to your good advice, and break off, or even postpone, this hateful marriage! Had I but done so, what a devilish happy fellow I should be, while now..... But it's no good talking or thinking of it; it maddens me to do either!" and he struck his brow, and set his teeth against each other.

"It is a bad job, I must confess, Axy," replied Lord Fitzwarren. "She his not exactly the kind of wife any man would marry, unless driven to it by sheer want of the needful; but, after all, the poor woman seems devilishly good-natured and hospitable, and it is not her fault, but her misfortune, that she is so vulgar. I really pity her."

"Reserve your commiseration for me, my good fellow, for having such a creature to bear my name. *She* has no feelings; and if she had, what could they be in comparison with mine? The low-born and under-bred never have any sensibility, take my word for it, and all pity is thrown away on them."

"No, Axy; hang it, I can't believe that *they* don't feel as much, perhaps, as we do. But this poor woman is, after all, greatly to be pitied."

"*Au contraire*, Fitz, she is much to be envied. Has she not got a title that many of her class would gladly pay tens of thousands for, without its costing her a guinea? And do I not leave her entire mistress of her own fortune, a piece of generosity on my part, for which she ought to be most grateful? She may well bless her stars at this unexpected change in my affairs, for the payment of

my debts would have swallowed up a considerable share of her revenue, and the remainder would have been barely sufficient to contribute to my wants, without leaving anything for her use. I had fully determined on seeing as little of her as possible, and of sending her to vegetate in some secluded and cheap spot in Wales; instead of which she has now ample means for living according to her vulgar and ostentatious taste, and will be plagued by no interference of mine."

The entrance of Durnford to announce that all was ready for his master's departure interrupted the *tête-à-tête* between the Marquis and Lord Fitzwarren, leaving on the mind of the latter a much more unfavourable impression than he had ever previously entertained of him. The utter recklessness with which this heartless *roué* unblushingly avowed his want of honour and delicacy astonished his companion, and he was about to hint his disapprobation, when Mademoiselle Justine rushed into the room, in a state of considerable excitement, and loudly and unceremoniously addressed the marquis.

"And so you be going off, milord, vidout so much as telling me vhere or vhen my bond is to be paid? Dis is very nice, after all de service I have render you in persuading Madame to marry you. Do not look so proud and so vex, for I tell you dat for all you tink yourself so andsome and so *séduisant*, Madame would never have marry you, if I had not made her."

"I have not time at present, Mademoiselle Justine, to attend to your claims," replied Lord Mountserratt superciliously.

"But I vill make you. Vat you tink, sare," and the *femme de chambre*, with flushed cheeks and eyes sparkling with anger, turned to Lord Fitzwarren, "vat you tink, sare, dis fine milord Anglais give me his bond for five tousand pounds to make Madame *ma maitresse* marry him, and now he vants to run away vidout paying de moneys, or so much as telling me vhere or vhen de bond vill be paid."

Lord Fitzwarren's countenance expressed the surprise and disgust which this new discovery of the unworthiness of his *ci-devant* friend occasioned him, and the marquis, as he observed it, seemed for a moment somewhat ashamed. He, however, quickly recovered his usual audacity, and informed Mademoiselle Justine that, as he left her in the undivided power of regulating the expenditure of her mistress, and of abstracting as large a portion of it in the shape of per centage on the purchases that lady might make, as she thought fit, he should advise her to put the bond in the fire, for that,

if she attempted to enforce its payment in England, she would find herself defeated, as he had taken the precaution, by a *douceur* judiciously applied to her legal friend and adviser at Rome, to have the bond so drawn up that it was perfectly invalid, a fact of which she might convince herself by consulting any legal man at Naples on the subject: and then, looking archly at the enraged Frenchwoman, he suggested the prudence of her not permitting the transaction to be talked of, as it would inevitably lead to her dismissal from the profitable place she at present enjoyed.

“*O! le vilain homme! le vilain homme!*” exclaimed Mademoiselle Justine. “Vat a cheat! vat a cheat!” and she looked very much inclined to try the sharpness of her nails on the face of the marquis, who, pressing the hand of the astonished Lord Fitzwarren, who was perfectly astounded at this last trait of consummate roguery in his unprincipled countryman, hastily left the room, followed by his *valet de chambre*, Durnford, whose arm the *femme de chambre* grasped, saying, “And you, Monsieur Dornfort, you who have sworn you loafed me better dan de life, vill you desert me to go vid dat vicked man! Oh, no! it is not possible.”

“Very sorry, Mademoiselle Justine, but it can’t be helped,” and he tried to disengage his arm from the firm grasp of the half frantic Frenchwoman.

“Go, traitor!” exclaimed she, with the air of a tragic actress in some provincial theatrical *corps*. “You are as vicked, and as great a cheat as your *vilain maître*,” and bursting into an hysterical fit of tears, she applied a slap on the face of her recreant lover, with a vigour that made the blood tingle in it, and then rushed to her own room to recover sufficient composure to be ready to attend the summons of her mistress, whenever that lady might ring for her attendance. “Vell, after all,” thought she, when she had indulged her tears and wiped her eyes, “it is perhaps all for de better. Madame is now, as I hear, a marquise, a very fine title, next to a duchesse, and I sall take precedence at de *table d’hôte* of every *femme de chambre*, except dat of a duchesse, and dis is vera good ting for me. And Madame is now married, and safe from de designing men vot would vant to marry her—and yet have no usband to interfere vid my profits, and spend all her money—and dis is good. All I fear is, dat dis *mauvais sujet*, ven he spend all de fortune his broder left him, vill come and take hers. Dat would be terrible! Vell, vot I must do is to make as moche money out of my foolish mistress as I can before he have time to spend his for-

tune, and den I vill be safe. *Mon Dieu!* vat a rogue dat milord is! I never tink any Englishman, and above all a milord, could be so clever. He has beat me, Justine Geroux, out of de field, and yet before dis I never did pass for a fool. And dat *vilain avocat* at Rome! *Quel brigand!* Oh! ven I see him, I vill give him such box on de face, as he sall never forget!"

The Marquis of Mountserratt, attended by his trusty *valet de chambre*, Durnford, descended to his carriage, amid a crowd of waiters, *frotteurs*, etc., headed by the host, whose wondering looks and profound bows somewhat irritated his lordship's nerves.

"My Lord Fitzwarren will settle all my accounts, and satisfy the courier who arrived this morning," said his lordship to the bowing host; and, having clasped the hand of his friend, and uttered a few apologetic words for the trouble he was imposing on him, he entered his carriage, and was whirled rapidly off, in little more than two hours after he had entered the hotel with his bride, whose existence he now appeared as wholly oblivious of as if she had never crossed his path.

"Well, my friend Axy is a cool hand, I must confess," thought Lord Fitzwarren to himself, after having ordered all the bills of the marquis to be sent to him for payment. "*He* never bestows a thought on the feelings of other persons, but goes straight-forward to the point that suits his own wishes. If *I* were as careless on these matters as he is, how easily *I* might set off, and leave poor Livy in the lurch!" And such is the danger of bad example, that the possibility of taking such a step for once crossed his mind. But the monosyllable *poor*, which he had mentally attached to the name of his betrothed bride, awakened better feelings in his breast; and he shook himself, as if in the act of throwing off some noxious insect, and raised his head erect as he exclaimed, "No, no, hang it all; I am made of different stuff from Axy, and could not bring myself to behave ill to a woman. No, poor Livy! *you* shan't be made unhappy, whatever *my* lot may be in a marriage, for which I have no more stomach than for a luncheon an hour after a hearty breakfast. But I must go and say a few civil words to the deserted bride. Poor devil! she is left in a most awkward position, I must say;" and the good-natured earl proceeded to the *salon* of the newly-made marchioness. He fully expected to find her in grief, or in anger—perhaps in both. Great, then, was his surprise when he beheld her busily engaged with Mrs. Bernard in turning over

the pages of a well-thumbed peerage, with no more traces of sorrow or anger in her countenance than if she had experienced no disappointment.

“Oh! my lord,” exclaimed she, “I am so glad you are come, for you can assist me. I want, now that I am a marchioness, to have the coronet and arms at once placed on my carriages, and Mrs. Bernard is bothering my brains about quarterings and supporters. I tell her that I will have no quarters, for I am fully entitled to have all the honours of the Marquis of Mountserratt’s arms, and, as to supporters, a well-lined purse and plenty of money in the funds are the best supporters of nobility and grandeur that I know.”

“Mrs. Bernard, I dare say,” replied Lord Fitzwarren, “means that you ought to have your arms quartered with those of Mountserratt.”

“Lord bless you, I have no arms except these,” and she held up hers. “If something *must* be added to the Marquis’s, I’ll have a large purse chuck-full painted—what do you think of that?”

“No bad substitute, I confess, madam.”

“So the marquis is off, and without so much as saying good-bye to his lawful wife! If any one had told me that a lord, and above all a marquis, could behave so badly, I wouldn’t have believed it. But I’m not sorry, for, if he had come, he would probably have asked me for money, which, for decency sake, I could not have refused him, as he is my husband; whereas, by his going off, without taking leave of me, I needn’t pay his bills here. He’s a bad one, you may be sure, and I have had a good riddance of him, and have got a grand title, of which he can’t deprive me, without its costing me much. So I have the best of the bargain.”

Lord Fitzwarren, seeing how little the deserted bride stood in need of consolation, took his leave, avowing to himself that the wife was quite as unfeeling as the husband.

CHAPITRE XXXIX.

When care sits heavy on the breast,
And all we seek is peace and rest,
How irksome 'tis to feel pent in
Within the crowded city's din!
How empty seem the scenes of joy
That all the idle hours employ
Of pleasure's votaries, who live
Heedless what Fate next hour may give!

Gladly would Mrs. Sydney and Louisa have avoided entering London, had not business compelled them to do so. They, however, determined to make but a brief stay in the metropolis, to the gaieties and bustle of which their minds were but ill-attuned, under their present feelings.

There are few things more depressing to the spirits, when aught has occurred to interrupt their usual equanimity, than the entrance into a vast and populous city. The crowded streets, the number of gay equipages rolling in quick succession along, and the air of occupation which pervades every one to be met with, make those who are indisposed to mingle with the gay and bustling throng still more conscious of their own chagrin, and inspire a longing desire to fly from the heartless pleasures these signs betoken. There is also something peculiarly depressing in entering a city after a long absence, where one has once had a happy home.

Home! that simple word, pregnant with so many dear and fond associations, takes even from the most populous capital the sense of loneliness engendered by crowds. The possession of one house, amid the thousands that constitute a large city, changes its aspect to us. We feel that we have a hearth around which we can draw those dear to us, and be as much at home, and in the enjoyment of as much privacy in the very centre of all the busy throngs of London, as if we were many miles removed from it. There we have set up our household gods, have established our domestic comforts; and the noise, bustle, and gaiety are either, through habit, unnoticed, or else they serve to exhilarate us. But when our *penates* lie shattered to the earth, that in the vast wilderness of brick and mortar before us, we own no spot we can call our own, that no home awaits us,

how different are our feelings! A vague sentiment of alarm takes possession of the mind in this worst of all solitudes, in which we are painfully conscious that in all the gay crowds circulating around us there is not perhaps one whose happiness can be influenced by our absence or presence, or who would mourn were we removed from the earth.

Such were the reflections that passed through the minds of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, as their travelling-carriage, covered with dust, rolled on to the hotel to which the former had written to have apartments engaged for them.

How different was the appearance of that heavily-laden vehicle to the well-appointed and highly-varnished carriages, drawn by prancing steeds, and attended by liveried domestics, that encountered it at every step! The occupants, too, of these last, in their fresh and tasteful habiliments, what a contrast did they offer to the two pale and languid women, who, in sombre garments, and with thoughtful brow, shrank back into the corners of their carriage, anxious to escape recognition from any acquaintance they might chance to meet!

What to Louisa were the crowds she beheld, knowing, as she did, that Strathern was not among them?—and she wondered, now that a sense of such loneliness oppressed her, how she had ever had resolution enough to induce her mother to fly from Italy, dear Italy, where at least she might have had the consolation of breathing the same air and beholding the same cloudless skies with him who occupied all her thoughts, but whose name her lips were so reluctant to pronounce.

Arrived at the hotel in Brook Street, they were shown to their apartments by a well-dressed, respectable-looking, and respectful-mannered waiter, and found everything in them so well arranged, that they might almost have fancied themselves in a private house, where they and their servants were the only inmates. Scrupulously clean, and with every article of furniture that could be deemed necessary for comfort, both mother and daughter were compelled to acknowledge that a first-rate London hotel, though less splendidly decorated, gained by comparison with that of every other country.

Their evening was, like all those lately passed, a dull one. Their stay would be so short that they did not wish to have those objects unpacked which not only furnish occupation, but give to every temporary domicile an air of home. The writing-boxes and implements for drawing and embroidery were not brought forth, and

the evening papers, with the last *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews*, were their resources against *ennui*. Neither were disposed to take advantage of them on the present occasion, for, fatigued and dispirited, they reclined listlessly in the comfortable easy chairs provided by their thoughtful host for the fashionable and fastidious guests who frequent his hotel, and who delight in recruiting their strength, after the endless round of pleasures that too frequently exhaust it, in lounging on sofas, or reclining in comfortable chairs.

Neither mother nor daughter gave a sigh to be partakers of the gaieties of which they were every minute reminded by hearing carriage after carriage rolling through the street, conveying its owners to *fêtes*, balls, and *soirées*. After so long a sojourn in the Eternal City, the bustle of London struck them with surprise; and, although greatly tired, it was not until a very late hour in the night, or rather until the morning had dawned, and the sounds of the carriages had subsided, that they found repose.

"It is some comfort," said Louisa, as she sat with her mother at breakfast the next morning, "that no one, except good Mr. Wadsworth, will know of our arrival. It would be dreadful to have a number of visitors, with whom we have not a single idea in common, crowding in on us. Persons during the London season are always so occupied with their pleasures, past, present, and to come, that they can talk of nothing else, and find those who take no interest in them dull and disagreeable; while to those who, from having been long away, are ignorant of all that forms the sum of their amusements, if not happiness, the details are so stupid and tiresome, that they cannot help wondering how beings with the pretension to rationality can find pleasure in such a round of heartless gaiety."

"We must not become morose, dearest," observed Mrs. Sydney, "the first step to which consists in a want of sympathy in the pleasures, as well as the cares of others, a habit into which we are all prone to fall when our minds have been engrossed by other pursuits. The fashionable world in London would be quite as much bored with our details of what most interested us at Rome, were we so simple as to enter into them, as we should be with their accounts of the operas, balls, concerts, and *soirées*, that fill up their evenings during the season. But let me look at the newspaper." After glancing her eyes over it for a few minutes, "Ah, my child!" exclaimed Mrs. Sydney, "you were premature in de-

claring that we might here enjoy the comfort of privacy by being incognito. Listen to this flourishing announcement of our whereabouts, under the head of fashionable arrivals. "At — Hotel, in Brook Street, last evening, Mrs. and Miss Sydney, with a numerous suite, from the continent, on their route to the magnificent seat of the beautiful heiress, where a series of splendid hospitalities will mark the return of these distinguished ladies to England, after so long an absence."

"Is not this too bad?" said Louisa Sydney. "How insupportable, that one cannot pass through London quietly, and proceed to one's home, without its being published in the papers! This publicity given to one's movements is, in my opinion, an odious tax on what, in common parlance, is termed fashionable life—a term known only in England. To have one's goings and comings, and one's whereabouts prated of in newspapers—one's hospitalities recorded, and one's attendance at places of amusement entered down, ostentatiously registering one's waste of time and abuse of wealth, is to me very disagreeable."

"It has its *désagréments*, I must admit, and foreigners notice it as among the most extraordinary of our customs. It exposes us on this occasion to the choice of two evils, and I leave it to you, dearest Louisa, to decide which you prefer to adopt. We must either give orders to be denied to all visitors, by doing which we sanction an untruth, or we must submit to be broken in upon every hour by persons who kill time by bestowing their tediousness on those for whom they feel not the slightest interest."

"Not at home must be the order of the day, mother, for I have not nerve enough to submit to the other alternative. Oh! how I long to be out of London!"

Instructions were given to the porter of the hotel to admit no visitors except Mr. Wandsworth, but even this exception need not have been named, for the servant despatched to Lincoln's Inn to acquaint that gentleman of Mrs. Sydney's arrival, and desire to see him, brought back the intelligence that he was dangerously ill.

"Let us then, dear mother, at once go home," said Louisa. "I long to be under the shade of our own magnificent trees, and to feel my foot on those smooth, soft, and verdant lawns, to which we have so long been strangers."

Mrs. Sydney assented to the proposal, and made all her arrangements to leave London early next morning. Glad were both mother and daughter as they sat reading the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh*

Reviews, when they heard carriage after carriage drive up to the door, and innumerable cards were sent to them, that they had taken the precaution of being denied to visitors. Among the names were few, if any, of persons whom they felt any desire to see, or who, in all probability, experienced any wish to see them; and as Mrs. Sydney wrote a list of those to whom cards were to be returned, she smiled at this convenient circulating medium of keeping up acquaintance, which saves time and trouble.

As evening closed in, Mrs. and Miss Sydney became aware of another consequence of the announcement of their arrival in the morning paper, for countless letters came pouring in to them, soliciting pecuniary aid, from persons of both sexes and all ages, giving such heart-rending descriptions of the direful poverty which compelled the applications, as greatly disturbed the equanimity of both the ladies. It would have required the purse of Fortunatus to have enabled these well-disposed women to extricate the various writers of those touching epistles from the overwhelming difficulties in which they avowed themselves to be placed. Nevertheless, the appeals were not all made in vain, and a donation was forwarded to each of those whose claims to commiseration appeared to be the strongest.

At an early hour next morning the ladies were in their carriage; and, as it rolled through the streets, now occupied by governesses and their fair pupils, and nursery-maids, conducting their young charges to the squares and parks, to enjoy the fresh morning air, with milkmen, buttermen, and bakers' boys, taking to their customers their daily supply of these different commodities, and newsmen hurrying along to deliver the morning papers, they were struck by the totally different aspect they presented to that which they would assume in the afternoon when filled by handsome equipages and well-dressed equestrians and pedestrians. No city presents so brilliant as well as so populous an appearance as London during the fashionable season at certain hours of the day; but at early morn, and from half-past seven o'clock in the evening, when people go to dinner, until it becomes time to attend the *fêtes*, balls, and *soirées* at half-past ten or eleven at night, the streets are comparatively deserted. It is true, carriages, and very frequently splendid ones too, may be seen in the streets—not stopping at the noble mansions of the rich and great, to which the coronets and heraldic honours emblazoned on their panels indicate that they belong, but at gin palaces

and less gaudy houses, where all appliances to quench the insatiable thirst said to be a malady peculiar to coachmen and footmen are provided. There may be seen the white-wigged coachman, with laced cocked hat, gorgeous livery, the seams covered with gold or silver lace, seated on the elevated hammercloth, on the sides of which are affixed the armorial bearings of the lordly owner, and, Oh ! profanation, the said coachman, forgetful of the dignity of the ppearance, no less than of his own, quaffing from a huge pewter pot the beverage he loves, occasionally blowing off with his breath the white froth that impedes his draught, portions of which descend in spray on his silk stockings and on the hammercloth.

During the operation, his prancing steeds are proudly champing their bits, their glossy coats, arched necks, and distended nostrils, filling with admiration the idle boys hovering around. Nor are the two tall footmen idle. Each is busy with a foaming pewter pot of porter, which, though he swallows with great zest, a certain disdainful toss of the head indicates that he is not quite satisfied with its quality. The subserviency and deferential bearing practised all day towards their lordly masters and mistresses are now exchanged for an easy and impudent demeanour, and a slang phraseology that impresses those around them with a greater notion of their science in the vulgar tongue than of their good behaviour. Butlers and housekeepers, whose employers are gone out to dinner, may be seen, *en grande toilette*, hurrying to evening parties, given either by the servants of other great families, or by the tradespeople whom they employ, leaving the charge of the noble mansions entrusted to them to under-servants, with a strict injunction not to leave the house, and these in turn absent themselves, transferring the trust confided to them to under-housemaids or scullery-maids, who take that opportunity of giving admission to their sweethearts "to take a cup of tea with them," a visit that not unfrequently leads to a future robbery, by enabling the said sweetheart to become perfectly well acquainted with the house. Ladies'-maids, elegantly attired in the left-off finery of their mistresses, may be seen tripping lightly along to meet their friends, the *valets de chambre* of the noble visitors of their employers, and housemaids, *endimanchées*, nimbly walking with the footmen or grooms who had engaged their affections. Shopkeepers and their assistants may be occasionally seen moving towards the parks, to enjoy, as they call it, "a mouthful of fresh air," which *agrément* has no inconsiderable portion of dust mingled with it. Nevertheless, such as it is, it enables them to

support the long hours of confinement in close shops, and the fatigue of standing behind counters and serving their customers all day.

One portion of the inhabitants of London, and a portion standing most in need of a little fresh air to recruit their exhausted frames, are denied this relief—the dressmakers and plain work-women. Oh! would the high and noble dames, for the adornment of whose persons these poor creatures toil through the weary day, and not unfrequently through the long night, reflect at how dear a price the graceful robe that displays the elegance of their forms so well is obtained! They would then combine together, and resolve to use their all-powerful influence to change a system introduced through the desire of meeting the unreasonable demands for dresses to be made up at notices too short to admit of their being finished, except by the sacrifice of the sleep of those who work at them. Could they behold the heavy eyes, the pallid cheeks, the attenuated frames, and care-worn brows of the poor dressmakers, they would never more issue orders for robes to be made in a few hours, and their consciences would be lightened of the weight of their having, for the gratification of their vanity, exacted that which could only be accomplished at so heavy a penalty to the maker. English women are not unfeeling; they are only sometimes forgetful. The fair creature whose delicate throat is encircled by Oriental pearls thinks not of the risk of those who dive beneath the wave to seize these costly gems. Could she but witness the operation, how would she tremble!—nay, we are not sure that even the warmest admirer of pearls would not thenceforth abjure them. So, when ladies see themselves attired in becoming robes, they reflect not on the weary hours of toil the manufacture of them has occasioned; if they did, and we earnestly hope they will, they would soon do all in their power to lighten the labour and to ameliorate the condition of dressmakers.

But we have widely digressed from our story. We left Mrs. and Miss Sydney quitting London on a fine morning in May, both heartily glad to escape from the metropolis, which at that season is so peculiarly attractive to most of their sex. Both were silent until they reached the suburbs, when Mrs. Sydney observed, pointing to the pretty abodes scattered on each side of the road, their little gardens in front, redolent with bright-coloured flowers and *maignonne*, the fragrance of which was wafted to them by the fresh morning air, “Look, dearest, at those modest but pretty dwellings.

We should search in vain for such in any country save ours. Other lands may show us more stately palaces than England can boast; but these clean, inviting houses, where the clerks of public or private offices and artisans have made their homes, and to which they return every evening when released from their daily task, can be met with only in ours. These very abodes are what most strike foreigners when they first visit England, and I now find myself, after so long an absence, as much pleased with them as strangers are. It seems as if by common accord the upper and middle classes had combined to render our country beautiful and attractive. The parks of the first, with their noble and umbrageous trees branching down to the verdant earth, and beneath which graceful deer, or fine cows, love to shelter themselves from the noontide ray, and the groves and shrubberies scattered around, render a journey in England delightful; but the picturesque cottages, with their latticed windows wreathed around by the starry jessamine, the twining woodbine, and the blooming rose, to be met at every step, are no less attractive. Even the labourer loves to cultivate the little strip of garden in which his humble cot is embowered; and, though the flowers with which it is filled may be but of the commonest and most homely kind, it nevertheless adds to the beauty of the general picture which every road in our favoured land presents, and helps to acquire for it the praise I have so often been gratified at hearing abroad, where strangers, on their return from England have said, "Ah! your country is a beautiful garden." This sympathy of taste for rural scenery between all classes exists, I believe, nowhere but with us. In Switzerland it may occasionally be seen in some districts, but here it is universal; and it ought, like sympathies in other things, to beget kind feelings between those who feel it, however different their grades may be."

"We, dearest mother, must become better acquainted with our rustic neighbours, though I should say *I*, instead of we, for you have always taken so deep an interest in them that you are already well acquainted with their affairs, and their wants, to which you have so often and judiciously administered. I have been less mindful, but I must make amends, and endeavour to find, in adding to their happiness, a consolation for the loss of my own."

Mrs. Sydney pressed her daughter to her breast, but attempted not to offer any of those commonplace and unavailing truisms so frequently resorted to on similar occasions, with a mistaken view of comforting the sorrowful or dejected.

Louisa felt the good sense and delicacy of her mother's forbearance, and thanked her in her heart for it, though a pressure of the hand alone marked her sense of it.

The travellers reached the little village of Silverton that evening, with the goodness of whose inn Mrs. Sydney had been so long acquainted in former times that she had made it a point always to sleep there on her route to and from home. Her presence, and that of her daughter, was hailed with undissembled pleasure by the good old landlady, who, having shown them into her best room, bustled about to prepare the choicest viands which her larder and stewpond could furnish for them.

"Oh! madam, this is, indeed, an unexpected pleasure and honour," said Mrs. Mappleton, as she brought into the parlour an enormous nosegay, hastily gathered from her garden, and placed it in a large India china bowl on a table near the window, which opened into the said garden. "My granddaughter read in a London paper this morning of your and Miss Sydney's arrival there, and greatly rejoiced we were at the news; but I did not expect that you would leave town in the middle of the season, when all the great folk are there, or that I should so soon have the honour of welcoming you at the Green Dragon."

Mrs. Sydney was touched and pleased at the warmth of the good hostess, and even the pensive Louisa was gratified. An excellent dinner was served in a shorter time than they thought it possible it could be prepared; and as they sipped their coffee after it, seated by the open window, and inhaling the delicious odour of the flowers and mignonette wafted into the room from the garden, they acknowledged that there are few inns that for comfort and quiet can be compared to the good old-fashioned country ones in England, where modern inventions, misnamed improvements, are unknown. Nor were Nurse Murray and the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Sydney less pleased with their room and good cheer.

"Ay, *this is* something like," said the former, as she partook of the excellent fare set before her. "No kickshaws here, mixed up until one can't even guess what one is eating, but good, plain, wholesome roast and boiled. What fresh fish, what white and plump poultry, and what tender, close-grained mutton! Yes, *this is* something like a dinner, after being starved in Italy on what they called *minestra*, by the way of soup, which consists of nothing but warm water, a very little lean meat, some maccaroni, and bad cheese; and three or four other equally bad dishes, made of

Heaven only knows what. Well, when the nobility and gentry can get such fare as this, and find such clean inns, with all the linen smelling of lavender, and the floors without a speck on 'em, it is a wonder to me how they can make up their minds to stop a year in Italy or France. Talk of the climate, indeed! why, I'd rather by far have the skies a little cloudy, and feel a little chilly, than have my eyes everlastingly dazzled by the sun, and my body parched by the heat, as in Italy. Then the blessing of a good seacoal fire!—there is nothing like it in the world—instead of wood blazing and sizzling, and wanting replenishing every half hour or so. And then think of the pleasure of being known and respected!—where in all Italy or France would Mrs. Sydney and our young lady find a welcome like what they met with here from Mrs. Mappleton, or where could we meet with such respect and attention? No, no, give me old England, and I never want to see foreign parts again; I have had enough of them, that I have.”

As Mrs. Sydney and Louisa sat conversing in the twilight, the sound of an Æolian harp, awakened by the freshening of the evening breeze, stole on their ears. It touched the hearts of both, and as they listened to its low, wild wailing, that resembles a requiem to the dead, tears chased each other down their cheeks, and neither was sorry that the effects of the melancholy excited by this most unearthly of all music were concealed by the shades of night. Mrs. Sydney's thoughts were with the dead. Often had she, with her husband, listened to similar sounds, which he greatly liked; nay, in the very chamber in which she was now seated, many years ago, they had sat together in the twilight, and left off conversing to listen to the same mournful music. Years, long years, had since then passed over her head; yet so freshly did the sweet and fitful ærial sounds which were now stealing along the chords bring the past before her, that it seemed but as yesterday since she last heard the same music with *him* who had so long been sleeping in the tomb. Louisa's thoughts, though *not* of the dead, had more of bitterness in them than those of her mother. Mrs. Sydney had the heart-soothing conviction that he whom she had so truly mourned, and still remembered with such tenderness, had died, loving her as fondly as on the day he called her bride; and the blessed hope that, when summoned from this earth, she would be re-united to him in that better world where no more partings are; while her daughter mourned over the most cruel disappointment of the heart, the falsehood of *one* in whom she had garnered up her whole

affection, her every hope of earthly happiness, and who, though alive, was as if dead to her. How often had she pictured to herself the return to her ancestral home, accompanied by Strathern!—and now she was journeying to it without him, with injured health and broken spirits—the present nearly insupportable to her, and the future clouded. How fair a fabric of happiness, based on confiding love, had she raised! O! why had perfidy and falsehood dashed it to the earth!

The pensive reveries of both mother and daughter were interrupted by the entrance of their good hostess, Mrs. Mappleton, bearing on a tray covered with a snowy napkin two small china bowls filled with curds and whey, in the preparation of which she was allowed to excel.

“I have taken the liberty, ladies, of bringing you something that you, dear madam, used formerly to make me vain by praising, and which this dear young lady used to like when she was quite a baby.”

“Thanks, good Mrs. Mappleton; and, though we had not intended to have anything before going to bed, we will certainly taste your delicious curds and whey,” replied Mrs. Sydney.

“Ah, madam! how time flies! The old proverb says, ‘weeds of grace grow apace,’ and surely Miss Sydney has grown into a charming young lady. It seems but yesterday since I saw her a beautiful baby in Nurse Murray’s arms. Right glad will all the country be, madam, to hear of your returning to Sydney Park. Often and often has your absence been regretted, though never blamed; for every one knew that delicacy of health, and not a desire to live away from your own country, was the cause of your absence. You will find the neighbourhood greatly changed, madam, and not for the better, I am sorry to say. Some noble families, and of the old stock, too, half-ruined, and gone abroad to retrench—gaming, madam, and horse-racing the cause of all. What a pity it is that there is not a law made to prevent noblemen and gentlemen from beggaring themselves and their children by such evil courses! Oh! madam, it was enough to make one’s heart ache to attend the sales that have taken place in this and the neighbouring county,—to see the noble pictures and statues, that have descended from father to son through generations, and which used to draw company on show-days from many a mile’s distance, taken from the walls and pedestals, where they were placed for more than a century, and brought to the hammer, exposed to the gaze and

remarks of London picture-dealers and Jews, who cared no more for them than just what profit they might gain by buying and selling them again. And to think how proud the elderly housekeepers used to be of showing the same pictures and statues to visitors, when humble folk, like myself and many of my neighbours, would hardly venture to speak above our breath in those grand rooms and galleries, when allowed to walk through them on show-days; and then to see them filled with low, vulgar-looking men, that in former times would not be allowed to go into the stewards' or housekeepers' rooms, seeming quite at their ease, with their hats on their heads, in apartments where the noblest in the land, and even royalty itself, were used to be! And to hear their low jokes where a coarse word was never before uttered! Oh! madam, it was indeed a sad sight; and, as I saw those fine things bought by such people, and taken to be placed, God knows where, I thought of what must be the feelings of shame and regret of the late owners, and how it must hurt them to look in the faces of their sons and heirs, after having, by their gaming and racing, dismantled the dwellings that ought to have descended to them, as they had done from father to son, through generation to generation. It seemed to me, madam, that the very pictures and statues looked ashamed and sorrowful at falling into such new hands. And the plate, too, madam, the fine massive gold and silver plate, with the family arms, off which kings and queens have been known to eat, handled by dirty hands, and weighed out like mere common gold or silver! The christening-fonts, too, used at the baptism of scores of noble infant heirs, now sold to be melted down; and the rich furniture, that was made expressly to fit every part in the house, sold piecemeal, to be scattered about to whoever might wish to buy it! Ah! madam, such a sight was enough to cure any gamester or horse-racer from ever playing or betting; but they seldom attend sales—indeed, few noblemen do—they employ Jew brokers to buy for them. But, bless me, madam, I fear I have tired you with my gossip; I forgot how late it is."

CHAPTER XL.

That man ne'er is, but hopes still to be blest,
An axiom is, by all mankind confess'd;
Its truth, if we look round us, we must own
In every lot, as well as ours, is shown;
See where Dame Fortune gives unbounded wealth,
Hygeia oft denies the boon of health.
Or if the two propitious deign to prove,
Then comes to vex, the wily archer, Love;
With such a host of torments in his train,
That Fortune and Hygeia's gifts are vain
To soothe the pangs his victims must endure,
Until the despot smiles and yields a cure.

A few days after the departure of Mrs. and Miss Sydney from Como, a letter from the Marquis of Roehampton reached his son. Lord and Lady Delmington, with Strathern, were seated at the breakfast-table when the letters were delivered, and the former no sooner recognised the handwriting of his stern father than he changed colour, and, taking it up, retired to his own chamber to peruse it. The fond wife had noticed the change in her husband's countenance, and would have followed him, but Strathern urged her to remain and wait until Lord Delmington either sent for her or returned. It was painful to witness her emotion.

"I fear, Mr. Strathern," said she, "that I have been much to blame in yielding to the solicitation of my beloved Francis in becoming his wife without the sanction of his father. Had he been in good health, dearly, fondly as I love him, I think I should have had firmness enough to resist his entreaties; but to see him depart alone, ill and wretched as he was, was more than I could bear, though, ever since I learned the sternness and severity of his father, I have accused myself for having clandestinely entered into a family who will, it is but too probable, repudiate me, and, what is infinitely more important, this step may draw down on my adored husband the everlasting displeasure of his parent. Oh! should this occur, and my fears tell me it is but too likely, I shall never pardon myself."

Tears filled the beautiful eyes of Lady Delmington, though Strathern endeavoured to give her hopes that, however the Marquis

of Roehampton might, under the first impulse of anger and disappointment, resent his son's marriage, time and reflection would reconcile him to that which was now irrevocable, and all might end happily. The youthful and inexperienced are ever prone to encourage hope; and as Lady Delmington listened to Strathern, bright visions of reconciliation, and future happiness based on it, once more filled her breast, and as she wiped away her tears she exclaimed, "Should the Marquis of Roehampton pardon this first and only fault of his son, my whole life shall be devoted to prove my gratitude. O, Mr. Strathern! how often have I wished that my dear husband, instead of being born to high rank and large possessions, had come of no higher lineage than my own, and had no brighter prospects than a moderate competency, for I feel that I am not fitted to the elevated station to which his love has raised me, and I have no greater ambition than to live in a happy seclusion with him."

The innocence and simplicity of Lady Delmington, which formed such striking and attractive characteristics in her, vouched for the truth of her *naïve* avowal, and Strathern sighed as he reflected on the stern and unbending nature of the Marquis of Roehampton, which offered so little ground for hope that such a daughter-in-law would ever be acceptable to him. No, some high-born dame, with a *hauteur* and *fierté* like his own, who would bring to the family genealogical tree, of which he was so proud, a fresh branch of ancient nobility, was what he desired, and even though she might possess no one fine or endearing quality to render his son's life happy, *he* would have preferred her to the most lovely and amiable of the whole sex who boasted not of noble birth, and would have deemed his son weak and unreasonable if such a wife did not content him.

After an hour's absence, Lord Delmington entered the room. He was even more pale than usual, and though he endeavoured to smile as his wife approached and laid her hand on his arm, looking into his face with a glance of the deepest tenderness, the smile was but a faint and sickly one, and his lip quivered when he attempted to speak.

"I see it all, dearest," said his wife, turning pale as marble; "it is all my fault."

"No, my own love. Do not regret having made me the happiest of men. Were it to be done over again, I would on my knees implore you, as I did then, to become mine; to give me a motive to

seek the preservation of a life that, without you, would have been valueless ; and, if length of days were denied me, to soothe those that remained. No day passes, my beloved, that I do not thank—that I do not bless you—for having yielded to my prayers. Do not, therefore, repent having given yourself to me, for to my latest hour I will be grateful for the happiness you have conferred on me.”

There was an earnestness and pathos in the tones of Lord Delmington’s voice that profoundly touched those who listened to him. His wife, the tears streaming down her cheeks, fell on his breast, to which he fondly pressed her, and Strathern moved towards the door to withdraw.

“Don’t leave us, my dear friend,” said Lord Delmington, “for we have need of your counsel. My father is obdurate. He wrote, under the impulse of violent anger, a letter which I will hope that, had he reflected coolly, he would not have addressed to an only son, so weak in health as I am. But let that pass. That no eye save mine should see that harsh and unkind letter, I have destroyed it. A time may come when *he* will regret having written it. In the mean time, he tells me that while he lives I am not to look to him for a maintenance. In short”—and here the ingenuous countenance of Lord Delmington became flushed up to the temples—“I am for the present a beggar.”

“No, my dear Delmington; not while I have a fortune, which, thanks to Providence, is far more than my wants or wishes require,” replied Strathern. “You must allow me to be your banker until your father relents, which be assured ere long will be the case. I only offer that which I am fully persuaded, under similar circumstances, you would do to me ; and I shall doubt the sincerity of your friendship if you hesitate to accept my offer.”

“You see, my beloved,” exclaimed Lord Delmington, “how every misfortune has its compensation. Had not my father behaved unkindly, I might never have known the generosity and devotion of my friend ; and yet, even without this last proof, be assured, my dear Strathern, that I counted on you as on a brother. I accept, with the same frankness and good faith with which you offered it, the pecuniary aid of which I shall stand in need until my father forgives the only step I ever could have taken against his wishes. Henceforth I will become your pensioner, and owe you the support a parent denies me.”

“You must follow no uiggardly system of misplaced economy, my dear Delmington. Remember that I am rich, have not a debt

in the world, and that your health and comfort, as well as that of Lady Delmington, greatly depend on the enjoyment of those things termed luxuries by the sordid, but which are indispensable to persons of delicate health."

"You will find me an unblushing debtor, my dear friend," said Lord Delmington, and he shook his friend's hand, while a look of gratitude from his fair and gentle wife repaid Strathern for all the interest he took in this youthful and amiable pair.

"Yes," said he to himself, as, an hour after this scene, he walked alone on the bank of the beautiful lake, on the precise spot where he had brought Louisa Sydney, when he had rescued her from a watery grave, and which, in spite of all his resolution to think of her no more, he found himself returning to more than once every day,—“Yes, to be loved as Delmington is, what sacrifice would I not make? O, Louisa! had you but felt towards me one half the tenderness which animates the breast of Lady Delmington for her husband, I should have been the happiest of men, instead of being, as now, the most wretched! The sight of their happiness increases my misery by reminding me of that which I hoped to enjoy. Would that I could chase her image from my breast! Oh! the humiliation of thinking always of one who flies my hated presence, and who, if she ever bestows a thought on me, indulges only one of scorn and dislike. Incomprehensible woman! what have I done to forfeit the affection she professed for me? That she *did* love me I can no more doubt than that I am now standing on the spot whence I sprang to save her—on the spot to which I bore her, when, believing her to be dead, I felt that death shared with her would be preferable to life without her. Faithless, cruel Louisa! you know not the pangs your desertion of me have inflicted, or you, even cold and unrelenting as you are, would vouchsafe some pity for him whose destiny you once promised to share! Would that I knew where you now are, for this ignorance of the abode of one whose image fills my heart, and occupies every thought, is insupportable! And yet what would it avail me to know where you are? Conscious as I am that were I to seek the poor consolation of even breathing the same air, you would fly from the spot, and deny me even this slight comfort.”

While Strathern was giving way to these sad reflections, Lord and Lady Delmington were differently employed. She had for some time indulged the hope of becoming a mother, a hope that filled her heart with delight, and which had been avowed to her lord, as

she hid her beautiful face on his breast, but now came the conviction that her hopes would not be disappointed, and, although faint and suffering, her joy was great; nor was that of her doting husband less.

"Yes, my own love," exclaimed he, as he fondly embraced her; "this event cannot fail to touch my father's heart, and if the Almighty will vouchsafe to us a son, he will relent, and all will be well. Now that *I* have the prospect of becoming a father, I feel more than ever disposed to turn with dutiful affection to mine."

"Heaven grant, dearest Francis, that it may be a boy! Oh! how I shall adore it, if it should resemble you!"

"But should it be a girl, my beloved Mary, we must not be disappointed," replied Lord Delmington; "and I am sure if it should be like its dear mother, I shall love it quite as well, nay, perhaps better, than if it were a boy."

"No, not better, Francis, don't say better, or I shall be jealous for our little son—pray Heaven that we may have one!"

Notwithstanding that Lord Delmington affected to make light of the cruel letter he had received from his father, and to encourage the hope in his wife that the birth of his child might induce a speedy reconciliation, he was far from feeling the hope which he expressed to her; and while endeavouring to assume a cheerful aspect in her presence, his mind was a prey to anxiety and gloomy forebodings, which not even the prospect of becoming a father could vanquish. He found himself frequently relapsing into thoughtfulness, from which he would cheer up when he noticed the eyes of his doting wife fixed on his face with an expression of deep anxiety; but the effort to appear gay was not a successful one, and she marked it with deep pain and increased tenderness at this new proof of his delicacy and affection. Yet there were moments, and they were neither few nor far between, when Lady Delmington, amid all the happiness of reciprocated love, and joyful hope of becoming a mother, bitterly regretted having drawn on her husband the paternal anger which, in spite of all his efforts to conceal it, weighed but too heavily on him. Every change in his countenance which indicated anxiety or melancholy awakened a self-reproach in her breast; and though she carefully concealed it from him, lest the knowledge that the sacrifice which he had made had not secured her happiness any more than his own, might add to his chagrin, there nevertheless were moments when, escaped from his presence, her tears would flow bitterly at the thought that, but for

his love for her, her dear Francis, so deserving of every blessing, would be free from the remorse of having offended his father.

Lady Delmington judged of her husband's father by her own, the kindest and most amiable of men, whom to have angered she felt would have made her wretched. She could not comprehend that her dear and gentle Francis, so calculated to conciliate as well as to feel affection, could have found in his only parent but a harsh and severe mentor, and a stern and unrelenting judge; hence she exaggerated the advantages he had resigned in allying himself to her, and pictured to herself a happiness in the paternal mansion which her husband had in reality never enjoyed there since the death of his excellent mother. A desire of not alarming her had prevented Lord Delmington from ever dwelling on the sternness and severity of the Marquis of Rochampton; hence she believed that remorse for having grieved a kind parent, and not a dread of the continued obduracy of a morose one, was the cause of the anxiety that paled the cheek and subdued the spirits of her husband. Had Lord Delmington found a parent like the one his young and inexperienced wife imagined his to be, he would have been one of the most dutiful as well as affectionate of sons, but the unbending *hauteur* and cold sternness of Lord Rochampton had destroyed all his son's confidence in his affection; and when he saw himself, an only child, in a state of health that must have alarmed any one interested in his existence, suffered to leave England, without his father offering to accompany him, or even betraying the least pity or forbearance towards him, when suffering under the first trial of disappointed love, he felt that ambition alone, of which he was to be made the tool, was the only tie that bound his father to him.

This conviction had hitherto precluded remorse for having offended him, but not even the severity of his letter—and it was couched in terms the most cutting and insulting—could prevent this good-hearted young man from now lamenting that he had given pain to his parent. This change in his feelings had been effected by the anticipation of becoming himself a father; and had at this epoch one line of kindness from the Marquis of Rochampton reached him, his heart, touched to almost womanly tenderness towards his wife and the child with which he hoped she would soon bless him, would have melted towards his father. “Did *he*, could he, have felt as I now do, on first hearing from my mother that he was likely soon to be a father?” thought Lord Delmington. “Did *he* watch her every movement, every change of countenance, as I do,

my sweet Mary's, and doat on the mother of his future child, if possible more than on the bride when first she blessed his arms, as I do? Oh! no, he did not, he could not, or never would he have treated me with the coldness and severity that has marked his conduct towards me from my childhood. I can call to mind no moments of paternal endearment, no mild counsel. I have ever felt as an unwelcome intruder in his house; and now, not content with banishing me from his presence, and declaring that he no longer considers me as a son, he insults and wounds me in the tenderest point, by heaping the most unmerited reproaches on the sole being on whom my happiness depends."

Such were the painful reflections that assailed Lord Delmington, and empoisoned the peace that, blessed with the devoted love of his amiable wife, would have been his, had his father acted towards him with common kindness, or even forbearance. His health, always delicate, became still more so, and his physicians, observing the change, and attributing it to the air of Como not being suited to him, advised his removing to the south of Italy. Strathern arranged that he should henceforth be the banker of his friend, and urged him to be in no way sparing of his purse, repeatedly assuring him that he was rich enough to enable *him* to support the most liberal expenditure, without in the least interfering with his own wants, or even luxuries. This generosity on the part of Strathern, forming so strong a contrast to the conduct of his father, greatly touched Lord Delmington, who felt that, without the interposition of his kind friend, he and his wife would have been placed in the most painful and embarrassing circumstances, in a foreign land. To owe their very subsistence to a friend, with so remote a chance of repaying the pecuniary part of the obligation, was annoying, if not humiliating, and to be reduced to this alternative by a father possessed of unbounded wealth increased the chagrin which was preying on his mind, and tended to destroy the chance of his recovery from the insidious malady which it seemed evident was making its slow but sure progress on his constitution. It was agreed that Lord and Lady Delmington should proceed by easy journeys to Leghorn, secure a villa in its immediate neighbourhood, there to await her accouchement, whence they could proceed by sea to Naples, and Strathern determined on returning to England.

How far this determination was caused by the belief entertained by him that Louisa Sydney had bent her course thither, we will not venture to guess, but certain it was that she was seldom an

hour absent from his thoughts, and his heart yearned again to behold her, or even to have the consolation of inhabiting the same country with her. He therefore resisted all the pleadings of Lord Delmington to accompany him to Leghorn; and on the day that he, Lady Delmington, and their physician left Como, *en route* for that place, Strathern set out on his journey to England. The parting of the friends was a sad one, for a presentiment that they should meet no more on earth haunted the mind of Lord Delmington. His increasing languor and debility but too well justified this presentiment, and the sadness which it engendered was calculated to help to accomplish the mournful presage. Strathern, although cheered by the sanguine hope held out by the physician, that his patient would, with care and a good climate, be yet restored to health, took leave of his friend with regret, and when he clasped his fevered hand, was more than half disposed to abandon his own projects, and accompany him to Naples. But the dread of this sudden change in his plan alarming the invalid, prevented his carrying it into execution, and he pursued his journey to England, indulging fond but undefined hopes, all terminating in one focus—namely, the seeing or learning tidings of Louisa.

Had he questioned himself as to the solidity of the foundation on which the hopes he built for the future were based, Strathern's reason would have whispered to him that it was unstable as sand moved by the waves of ocean; but when did a true lover permit himself to analyze the grounds of the hope that cheers, or doubt the syren whose smile enables him to bear the present, and look forward without gloom to the future? There were moments, it is true, when his spirits drooped, and he doubted the wisdom of his so soon returning to England. Pride whispered that he would be suspected of following her who fled from him, and this somewhat galled his proud spirit; but love silenced the whispers of pride, and then prudence reminded him that it was time for him to see to the completion of his new house, and to make arrangements for the placing in it those fine works of art he had purchased in Italy. It was at the close of evening, when twilight threw its shadowy curtain around, that sad and gloomy thoughts most triumphed over Strathern, and clouded his view of the future with despondency. Who is it that at such an hour has not felt the influence of the departing day so beautifully described by Dante!—

“Era già Forà, che volge 'l disio,
A' naviganti, e' intenerisce il cuore,

Lo di, ch' han detto a' dolci amici Addio :
 E che lo nuovo peregrin d'amore
 Punge, se ode squilla di lontano,
 Che paja 'l giorno pianger, che si muore."

This pensiveness is experienced on land as well as on sea, as Strathern found ; and when at early morn the sun illumined the landscape, lending a golden radiance to every object around, he felt his spirits cheered, and hope revived within his lately desponding breast, he acknowledged that those who have cause for regret should avoid travelling in the twilight hour, and choose the bright morning and cheerful day for their wayfaring. Louisa Sydney would have believed in the power of sympathy had she seen with what anxiety her lover turned over the leaves of the books in which the names of travellers are registered at the different inns where he halted, that he might trace her route ; and, when he beheld her name, he would pause to admire the delicate penmanship, and press it to his lips. And yet—oh, strange delusion !—this was the lover whose affection she doubted, and whose truth she disbelieved ! As Strathern drew nearer to the goal to which his wishes pointed—to that England, less dear to him as his native land than as being the place of her abode—his hopes diminished, and he asked himself why he had ever been so weak as to indulge them. Had he not had the most irrefragable proofs of her obduracy—of her refusal even to reveal to him how he had offended?—and yet, after all this, he had been so blinded by his passion as to entertain a hope that his coming to England might lead to some favourable result. When, however, he touched his native shore, and reflected that no sea now rolled between him and the object of his affection—that the air he breathed was the same which she respired, and that a few brief hours might, if she permitted it, bring him to her presence—his spirits became elated, and he rejoiced that he had come home.

Arrived in London, he took up his abode at the Clarendon Hotel. How he longed to discover whether Mrs. Sydney and her daughter were in town, and pondered over the best mode of ascertaining this intelligence ! Where was he to inquire ? Who should he ask ? He suffered the waiter to present the *menu* for his dinner three times before he was aware of his presence, so wholly occupied was his mind in thinking whether Louisa was or was not in town ; and when dinner was served he rendered but little justice to the excellent *cuisine* for which the Clarendon is so remarkable, his anxiety so

wholly destroyed his appetite. This last effect of a *passion malheureuse* may, in our degenerate days, be received as a rare and indubitable proof of true love—so rare that some might question the fact, for few are they who allow the wants of the heart to influence the cravings of the stomach, as may be proved by witnessing the young men of our time at the tables of the *Amphitryons* where they dine on all the delicacies of the season, or at their clubs, where they abuse the cooks for not having provided them. No, dinner is a weighty affair with them, and she must be indeed peerless, who could prevent them from seriously applying themselves to it, with all the *savoir* in the *science de bouche*, for which our *jeunes gens* are no less remarkable than for their power of eating. Strange however, as the example may be, it was nevertheless a fact, that ever since the unaccountable rupture with Louisa, Strathern's appetite had lost its zest, a circumstance which was revealed by his having grown thin and pale of late.

When his late dinner was removed, and that he had skimmed over the evening papers while sipping his coffee, he bethought himself of going to the Opera. "Fond of Italian music as Louisa is, she will be sure, if in London, to be there," thought Strathern, "and I may have the happiness of gazing from a distance on that lovely face which I must not nearer approach." His heart beat quicker as he entered the theatre which he hoped might contain her. By the aid of gold, he was shown to a private box, when, having ensconced himself behind one of the curtains, he directed his glass in search of the only fair face he wished to behold. Over how many handsome ones did his eye hastily glance, no one among them having the power to detain it for a moment, when he found that it appertained not to her he sought!

All Englishmen who have been some time absent from their country are struck when they return to it by the blaze of beauty that breaks on their sight when they first visit any place of public amusement; but at the Italian Opera, more than at any other theatre, does this strike one, for the full dress, in which it is the custom for ladies to appear there, develops their charms to greater advantage, and each box looks like the window of some *millionnaire* flower fancyst, who had placed in it the choicest treasures of his parterre, so fair, blooming, and fresh are the youthful and lovely creatures to be seen around.

But Strathern heeded them not. What to him were these young and radiant beauties, when he sought only, thought only, of one, and

her well-remembered face no where met his view? Even the music, admirable as it was, failed to charm his ear; and the dulcet notes of Grist, the all-perfect science of Persiani, the heart-thrilling tones of Rubini, and the splendid voice of the great Padre Lablache, for once were heard with indifference. He reconnoitred from the other side of the theatre every box on the opposite side; but his search was vain, and he returned to that which he had secured, merely because he dreaded a solitary evening at his hotel still more than the crowded solitude he was in. When, however, the ballet commenced, the brisk music and rapid evolutions of the *déesse de la danse* who opened it were so little in accord with his feelings, that he arose and left the house at the moment that a deafening shout of bravas proclaimed the triumph of the graceful and elegant Taglioni, and the delight of those who witnessed it.

“What is it you, indeed?” demanded Mr. Rhymor, laying his hand on the arm of Strathern, who was passing quickly along without having observed him. “Why, who expected to meet you here? and yet nothing is so natural; for I learnt, not a very long time ago, that a certain fair lady, in whom you take a more than common interest, had been in London, though neither her mother nor her fair self had condescended to inform me of their arrival. They remained, as I heard, but a very short time in London, and went down to their country-seat, for which I take for granted you are *en route*, for you look *affairé*. You are a fortunate man. I suppose it is a useless compliment to ask you to stay a day in town to dine with me? Good night!”

CHAPTER XLI.

O Fortune! ever mutable and vain,
That lov'st to make poor mortals still thy sport,
When once thy fickle smiles begin to wane,
How soon the world forgets to pay its court
Where erst the herd, with smooth and fawning mien,
Came offering friendship that it did but feign!
'Tis then we learn our real friends to know,
And false and selfish summer ones to fly,
And gladly from the fluttering crowd we go
In some calm solitude to rest, and die;
For knowledge of that world which look'd so fair
When Fortune smiled, is apt to breed despair.

It was on one of those lovely evenings that follow a sultry day sometimes granted to us in our uncertain climate, and the more highly appreciated from their rarity, that Mrs. Sydney and her daughter approached Sydney Park. Short as had been the notice of their intended arrival, the tenants and dependants had collected; the former, in their best clothes and mounted, rode forth to the next post town to meet the carriage, and the latter prepared to take the horses from it, and to draw it themselves. The ladies were both much touched at this proof of attachment and joy at their return, but so firmly yet kindly declined the last measure, that it was at length abandoned, and, escorted by the horsemen, and followed by those on foot, they proceeded to their home.

The delicious freshness of the air, the bright verdure of the park, with its stately and umbrageous trees throwing their giant branches far around, and their foliage feathering down to the grass—the timid deer, alarmed by the unusual sound of the cheers that welcomed their owner, starting off to their coverts—the lowing kine laving their legs in the limpid river that wound through the park, spanned by a beautiful bridge of a single arch, presented so charming a landscape as they entered the lofty gate, that both mother and daughter acknowledged that they had seen nothing to compete with it in their travels. A startled hare occasionally crossed the road, and innumerable blackbirds and thrushes were hopping about, and sending forth their notes, as if to join in the general welcome. Every turn of the smooth and even road presented some

new and attractive view, until the fine old mansion stood revealed. The setting sun had tinged all its windows with his golden beams, and gave a roseate hue to the flag which floated from the stately dome in the centre, to announce the presence of the mistress of these wide domains.

A procession of about fifty girls, clothed in their holiday suits, and headed by their schoolmistress and her assistant, were drawn up on one side of the approach to the house to greet their benefactress; for these children had all been educated and clothed at the expense of Mrs. and Miss Sydney, and about the same number of boys, with their schoolmaster and his assistant, were ranged on the opposite side. The hearts of both mother and daughter were touched. Louisa, for the first time, felt the responsibility as well as the proud sense of proprietorship swell her heart, as she beheld the glowing landscape, the stately home, and the vast number of those who looked to her for maintenance. She felt that, as mistress of this noble place and large fortune, she had many duties to perform—that from where much is bestowed much is expected—and though a pang did shoot through her heart, as the thought crossed her of how much more she would have been delighted with all she now witnessed, were *he*, with whom she once believed she was to have shared her possessions, with her, she made an effort to quell it, and to think only of contributing to the happiness of others, however she might despair of securing her own.

How differently do things appear when viewed from a distance, in the mind's eye, or in reality! Although Louisa had often pictured to herself her reception whenever she should return to her ancestral home, the actual scene before her far surpassed the anticipated one. She felt that she must no longer, as hitherto, live for herself alone; that her tenants and dependants had strong claims upon her; and that a great, a serious responsibility was attached to her position. She remembered that she possessed a dear, kind, and judicious guide for the fulfilment of those duties in her beloved mother, and turned to embrace and welcome her home, but she started when she found her cheeks wet from the contact with those of her parent, who, pointing to the spire of the church seen through the trees, whispered—“*There*, my child, repose those blessed ones who would have welcomed us, had the Almighty been pleased to spare them to us; and *there* we, too, my Louisa, will be called away from all that now charms your eyes, and draws tears from mine. *I* have witnessed similar scenes of rejoicing for the return of your dear

father, whose presence never failed to diffuse joy and happiness around, and this one brought back to me, my child, the memory of other days. Oh! may every blessing attend my darling in the home of her fathers!" and Mrs. Sydney drew her daughter to her breast, and smiled through her tears, as she fondly pressed her to it.

The ladies alighted, and, Louisa supporting her mother, ascended the flight of steps that led to the noble portico of the mansion. Shouts of joy rent the air, and "Long live Mrs. and Miss Sydney!" was uttered by all around. The ladies had smiles and nods for all, not even the humblest were disregarded; and as they entered the lofty vestibule, around which fine statues and beautiful marble vases, filled with rare and blooming flowers, were ranged, they felt that they were indeed at home. There stood the venerable housekeeper, dressed in her choicest silk gown, and her finest laced cap, with her huge bunch of shining keys attached to her side, curtsying and smiling, and behind her were the female domestics, in their best clothes. The grey-headed butler was at the head of the men servants, in their handsome liveries, bowing, and hoping the ladies were not very much fatigued. The apartments, filled with flowers, and beautifully clean and bright, testified the care and attention bestowed on their preservation, for the mirrors and furniture looked like new.

Louisa felt an almost childish delight in wandering from room to room, and looking on the various treasures of art and *virtù* which they contained, while her mother stood before the portraits of her husband and son, gazing on those fondly-loved and well-remembered features, so often present in her dreams, and seldom absent from her waking thoughts. A small but *recherché* dinner was served in the *salle à manger*, consisting of the dishes most preferred by Mrs. Sydney, whose taste neither the housekeeper nor cook had forgotten. Iced water, clear and sparkling as crystal, attested that the good old butler remembered her partiality for that beverage, and fruits of the most delicious flavour served at the dessert, forced both ladies to acknowledge that the products of English hothouses surpass the growth of southern climes. Nor were the tenants or poor neglected. Both were regaled with an abundant supply of substantial viands and strong ale, provided by the forethought of the house-steward, butler, and housekeeper, and cakes and syllabubs furnished forth a feast for the children.

“ There is nothing like home, dear mother,” said Louisa Sydney, as they sipped their tea in the small drawing-room late that evening. “ I had almost forgotten Sydney Park, and never thought it so beautiful as I now find it. How fresh, how green is the park, and how different from the parched and scanty herbage of Italy! How magnificent are the trees, with all their leafy honours, and how they gain by a comparison with the dried, burnt, and meagre foliage of the country we have left! Then the cleanliness, the good order, that pervades this house—the air of mingled elegance and perfect comfort that reigns around; is it not delightful? I feel as if I should never wish to leave my home, but wear out the even tenor of my life in this calm and beautiful abode—

‘ The world forgetting, by the world forgot.’ ”

Louisa Sydney’s slumbers that night were less broken and more refreshing than any she had lately known, and she awoke next morning with calmer feelings, and a desire for occupation never experienced since the fatal evening when the faithlessness of her lover had been revealed to her at the Coliseum. When she opened her window, and looked out on the beautiful prospect it commanded, over woods and groves, hills and dales, with the rapid and silvery river that wound through the velvet-like lawn in front, and the flowery meads at a distance, with the azure mountains that bounded the horizon, her eye wandered with delight over the enchanting view, and she murmured to herself, “ All this fair scene is mine. Why, possessor of it, does my ungrateful heart still sigh for one blessing which, unattained, renders all others unavailing in securing my happiness?” The dew of early morn still sparkled on the leaves, and shone like diamonds on the blooming flowers in the parterre, and the birds carolled forth their hymns of praise to Him who had created this beautiful earth, and all the wonders it contains. Who that has listened to the sweet notes of these tuneful choristers of the grove must have felt that, more grateful than man, they pass their brief lives in giving forth songs of joy, while *he*, but too often regardless of the good provided for him, walks through scenes of soul-stirring beauty, which ought to awaken the liveliest sense of pleasure, with clouded brow and thankless heart, dwelling only on grovelling cares and worldly occupations! Louisa Sydney gazed long on the scene before her; and, her spirit soothed by the contemplation of its tranquil beauty, she wondered how she had

ever so far forgotten its attractions, as to remain so long an exile from it.

For some days, her time was spent in exploring the cool and sequestered purlieus of the park and noble gardens. So well had they been attended to during the long absence of her mother and herself, that even her fastidious taste found nothing to correct; and art had so judiciously identified itself with nature, that their union produced the happiest effect. Louisa rejoiced that the London season detained the neighbouring nobility and gentry from their seats, and left her and her mother free from the routine of visits and dinner-parties, to which, under her present state of mind, she felt an insuperable objection, yet from which she would have found it difficult to extricate herself without giving offence. She now, guided by the experience of her mother, entered on those duties always entailed by the possession of a large fortune; and, in the constant occupation which they afforded, she found the best relief for the sad thoughts of the past, which would but too frequently intrude on her mind. Mrs. Sydney was highly gratified in observing the desire evinced by her daughter to render her dependants happy, and the activity with which she carried into execution every project calculated to benefit them. Health again began to tinge the pale face and to sparkle in the dark eyes of the lovely Louisa, the happy result of pure air and constant exercise; and, although sighs would sometimes agitate her breast, there was less of sadness in it than the fond mother had dared to hope for from thrice the time that they had passed at Sydney Park.

A few weeks after Mr. Wandsworth arrived, and his countenance, usually remarkable for its cheerfulness, struck Mrs. Sydney with a vague sense of alarm. There was a constraint, too, in his manner, so different from its general open frankness, that it confirmed the undefined fear his grave aspect had excited in her mind, and rendered her nervous and impatient to learn the cause.

"Something disagreeable has, I am sure, occurred," observed she, when, having led him into the library, where he expressed a desire to converse with her alone, she sank into a chair.

"Why, yes, my dear madam," replied Mr. Wandsworth, "my visit here *is* connected with a painful business—one that will require all your fortitude and patience to bear, and I trust to the exercise of both to no ordinary extent to prepare Miss Sydney for the unexpected and severe trial that awaits her."

"Good heavens! Mr. Wandsworth, what do you—what *can* you

mean? Pray do not keep me a moment longer in suspense, but let me at once learn the worst."

"Painful, indeed, is the task imposed on me; nevertheless, it must be fulfilled. Know, then, that your daughter's right to this estate, to the whole fortune which she inherits from her father, is more than questioned—is denied—and that the next heir-at-law claims it on the plea of the invalidity of the process had recourse to by her grandfather when he made the last settlement of the estates, entailing them on his female descendants in case of the want of male issue."

Mrs. Sydney listened in breathless silence. Not a single exclamation broke from her lips, but an extreme paleness overspread her face, and she motioned with her head for Mr. Wandsworth to continue.

"You may well believe, madam, that I consulted the first legal authorities on this momentous question, which I deferred laying before you while yet a hope existed in my breast that the claim set up by Mr. Sydney, of Sydney, was unjust; but grieved am I to say that the first lawyers in England, after a patient investigation of the case, and a strict scrutiny into the title-deeds, have agreed that Mr. Sydney is entitled to the estates, and that a trial in a court of law must terminate in our defeat."

"This is, indeed, an unexpected blow, Mr. Wandsworth, and falls heavily just as my daughter had learned to love this place, and to discharge the duties it entailed on her. Would that I had not returned here, for then this stroke of fortune would have been less severely felt! It is hard, very hard, to be driven from the home of her childhood, from a spot where the remembered virtues of her lamented father have acquired for her the affection which, in time, her own merit would have won; but it is useless to repine. We must bow with submission to His will who sees and ordains what is best for His creatures, and I am sure that my daughter will not hesitate a moment in delivering up a property to which another has the right without awaiting the issue of a trial. I will go and prepare her, and return to you in a short time."

Mrs. Sydney left Mr. Wandsworth highly impressed with the patience with which she submitted to the change of fortune it had been his painful task to communicate to her. "Poor lady," thought he, "it must be hard for her to leave this place, endeared to her by the remembrance of all the happiness enjoyed in it during the life of her excellent husband. And the young lady, too, looked on as so

rich an heiress! Well, well, who would have thought of such a reverse of fortune! What a noble place! It requires no slight degree of philosophy to resign it, even for a time, with fortitude. For a time," muttered he. "Yes, Heaven be thanked, it will not be for ever! With her youth and his advanced age, it will yet surely be hers. But I will not inform her of this: it would only render her unsettled and restless. Heiresses have such disadvantages to encounter, that Miss Sydney will be a gainer if she be led to believe that she has for ever lost this noble place. Yes; I will conceal the fact that she is next heir after Mr. Sydney, who cannot leave it from her." Such were the reflections of Mr. Wandsworth as he walked up and down the spacious library, now pausing to look around at the lofty bookcases, stored with the works of the best authors, and then glancing from the windows on the beautiful landscape they commanded.

Mrs. Sydney, not finding Louisa in her own room, sought her in the flower-garden, where her maid said she was to be found. With a beating heart and trembling steps she approached her child, who no sooner saw her than she came up and joined her.

"I am so glad, dearest mother, that you are here, for I was wishing to consult you on an improvement I purpose making. Look what a beautiful view this rise in the grounds commands. What can be more lovely? Would it not be just the spot to erect a light pavilion where we might seek a refuge from the sun, or a sudden shower, and enjoy the noble prospect. Look here at the little sketch I have made. Don't you think this circular building, with the roof supported by Doric columns of white marble, would have a very good effect? I find my love for Sydney Park increase every day, and I intend, if you approve it, to add several embellishments to the grounds."

The heart of the fond mother felt a severe pang as she listened to these projects—projects never to be realised by her who uttered them—and she paused to collect sufficient force to reveal to her daughter the intelligence which weighed so heavily on her own spirits.

"You are silent, dearest mother," exclaimed Louisa, and she looked anxiously in the face of Mrs. Sydney. "You are pale, too. You must be ill, I am sure; let us hasten to the house;" and she drew her mother's arm through her own.

"I am not ill, my dear Louisa, but pained, agitated. News of a very serious and distressing nature has reached me—news which nearly and gravely concerns you, my child."

“O! mother, speak, in pity speak. Strathern is ill, or worse—he is——,” dead, she would have said, but the words died on her tongue, and she became pale as marble, and trembled violently.

“No, my Louisa; the news to which I referred did not relate to him.”

“Heaven be praised!” ejaculated Louisa, clasping her hands together, and raising her eyes towards the sky, with a look of such intense thankfulness, that Mrs. Sydney became more than ever convinced of the depth and unchangeable character of her attachment to Strathern.

“You do not inquire what is the bad news that has so pained me, my child?” asked Mrs. Sydney, after waiting a few minutes to give Louisa time to recover her self-command; but this required more than she had anticipated, for now that she was assured of the safety of her lover, she greatly regretted having exposed the state of her feelings with regard to him to her mother, and experienced a painful degree of embarrassment in her presence. “Have you no desire to know what I came to reveal to you?” demanded Mrs. Sydney.

“Yes, mother,” replied Louisa, blushing deeply.

“Judge what my grief must be when I heard you, dearest, planning embellishments for a place, that, alas! no longer belongs to you.”

And now Mrs. Sydney repeated to her daughter all the particulars communicated to her so short a time before by Mr. Wandsworth. Louisa listened in silence, and with a calmness her mother hardly hoped for; and when Mrs. Sydney had concluded her statement she observed, “Ah! mother, had this stroke of fortune been anticipated some months back, what a change might it have made in my destiny! It is hard to leave this beautiful place,” and she paused and glanced around with tearful eyes; “but we must bear it as becomes those whose happiness does not depend on wealth. I am still rich in your affection, for *you* will not love your child less now that she no longer owns these wide domains than when you believed her to be a rich heiress. Henceforth, mother, I shall have a satisfaction hitherto denied me, namely, that of being assured that those who love me can be actuated by no mercenary motive, but love me for myself alone.”

Even at this trying moment, when it was announced to her that she had lost a fortune, the possession of which she had only lately learned to enjoy, the heart of the woman yearning for affection, and

filled with the desire of owing it wholly to her own personal and mental qualities, found a consolation for a loss that would have plunged many of her sex in utter despair.

"Yes, my child," replied Mrs. Sydney, desirous of encouraging her daughter to find consolation in this unexpected source which now presented itself to her. "You certainly may *now* discard all suspicious of interested motives in those who profess to love you. Mr. Wandsworth will be agreeably surprised to find how well you bear this sudden stroke of adversity; so let us go to him at once. I believe we must leave this place with as little delay as possible."

"You are right, mother; it would not be proper for us to remain in a house that is no longer ours, and the present owner is not one to whom, from all I have heard of him, I should like to owe any obligation."

As the ladies proceeded towards the house, the head gardener, hat in hand, and lowly bowing, came up, and presenting a paper to Miss Sydney, said, "Here, madam, is the plan for the new parterre you wished to be laid out. Is it your pleasure to have the men set to work on it to-morrow?"

"No, Westman; let all the alterations I proposed be postponed for the present," replied Miss Sydney, and she moved on, leaving the gardener utterly surprised at this change in her intentions, as she had only the previous day urged him to use the greatest expedition in carrying her plans into execution.

Mr. Wandsworth was indeed surprised when he saw the fortitude with which one so young, and nursed in the lap of fortune, bore the reverse which had so unexpectedly befallen her. His regret for her misfortune increased with the admiration her noble character excited in his mind, and deeply did he lament that he had still intelligence to impart which would add to the troubles of both mother and daughter. Not only was Mr. Sydney entitled to the whole of the estates hitherto believed to belong to Miss Sydney, but all the rents received since the death of her father, and appropriated to the payment of debts and mortgages incurred by her grandfather, an extravagant and improvident man, must now be refunded, and to do this would swallow up nearly the whole of Mrs. Sydney's private fortune, large as it was.

When this additional calamity was revealed to her she bore it with much less equanimity than did her daughter. To see her only child, on whom she so fondly doated, reduced at once from affluence

to comparative poverty, was a trial beyond her power to support with courage in the first hour of affliction, and Mr. Wandsworth, seeing her grief, reminded her that she was not by law compelled to give up any portion of her own private fortune to meet the claims of Mr. Sydney.

“Perhaps not by law,” replied she, the blood mounting to her pale cheeks; “but if honour and honesty require this sacrifice, it shall be made. I fear not poverty for myself; but for my child,” and the fond mother’s lip trembled with emotion, “I confess I find it hard to bear.”

Louisa embraced her parent, and whispered to her the soothing assurance that in a cottage, however humble, with her, she would be as contented as in the finest dwelling, and Mrs. Sydney smiled through her tears and pressed her to her heart. What a change had one day effected in the destiny of both mother and daughter! The morn had seen them in the possession of vast wealth and a home combining all that elegance and comfort could effect; the youthful heiress, busy in projects for embellishing still more highly this favoured spot, and rendering her dependants happy.

The evening found them with tearful eyes, and heavy hearts, oppressed with the sad consciousness that they were now unwelcome intruders in the house of another, whence they must go forth to seek an abode more suited to their fallen fortunes. How many tender memories crowded to the minds of both, as they glanced around on objects endeared to them by long association, and to which they must so soon bid an eternal farewell. Mr. Wandsworth evinced the deepest interest and sympathy in their positions, and vowed within his own breast that every effort in his power should be made to serve them. He was well acquainted with the character of him to whom the noble fortune hitherto believed to appertain to Miss Sydney devolved. A man of sordid habits, devoted to amassing and hoarding wealth, which he had neither the taste nor desire to expend in any laudable pursuits, or generous hospitality, Mr. Sydney was regarded by all who knew him as a hard, selfish, and unfeeling miser, who would exact to the utmost farthing what the law decreed he had a right to. Vain would it be to make any appeal to him in favour of her so lately supposed to be the heiress of the wide domains now to become his. No; he would insist on having his rights, even though the refunding them might leave Mrs. and Miss Sydney in the most abject poverty; and, as Mr. Wandsworth reflected on this, he felt a more lively interest in the

fate of both mother and daughter, who, soothed by his unobtrusive and respectful sympathy, determined to be guided by his advice, and to take no step without his approval of it.

They sought their pillow that night with little hope of finding that repose of which they both stood so much in need after a day of such overwhelming troubles. And was this to be, indeed, the last night they were ever to pass beneath the roof where one had known the only happy days of her existence, and where the other had first opened her eyes on this chequered life? Their altered position appeared to them so like a troubled dream, that they were tempted again and again to question its reality, and when towards morning they sank into feverish and broken slumbers, their dreams were agitated by the events of the previous day, and they awoke unrefreshed and sorrowful.

Having pointed out to Mr. Wandsworth the few objects they wished to retain, among which the portraits of her husband and son were the most valuable, Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, attended by nurse Murray and one other female servant, with a male domestic, quitted Sydney Park. To avoid taking leave of those who would so bitterly lament their departure, they allowed the establishment to think that they were only to be absent for a short time, and with heavy hearts, and as much external composure as they could assume, they bade adieu to their late happy home. Mr. Wandsworth so warmly pressed them to accept the loan of his villa at Richmond for the present, urging, as an additional motive, the necessity of their being either in London, or its immediate neighbourhood, until all had been finally arranged with Mr. Sydney, that they consented. He had always a small establishment at Thames Grove, the name of his villa, and having written to his housekeeper to apprise her of the guests she was to receive, he knew they might expect to find everything in order for their reception.

Both ladies were grateful for this kindness, for nothing could be more disagreeable to them than to find themselves in London at the present crisis; and when, late on the evening of the second day of their journey, they entered the picturesque and neatly-furnished dwelling lent to them, they were thankful that so much comfort was still accorded to them in their trouble.

CHAPTER XLII.

If rich, and in society you'd thrive,
Play cards, your money lose, your temper keep;
And, though the greatest *parvenu* alive,
You may ascend to fashion's dizzy steep :
For lords and ladies always wish to win,
And easy dupes are pardoned every sin.

Lord and Lady Wellerby and their daughters arrived at Naples a few days after the ill-assorted nuptials of the Marquis of Mountserratt, and were received by Lord Fitzwarren with a better grace than any of the family had anticipated, for, truth to tell, the father, mother, and sister, were as fully aware of the state of that nobleman's feelings as was the Lady Olivia, whom they most concerned, and who dreaded nothing so much as that he should fail to fulfil his engagement with her. They were, consequently, agreeably surprised by the good-natured if not warm reception they experienced at his hands, and Lady Olivia rose considerably higher in their estimation as they saw the hour approach that would remove her from their jurisdiction, and elevate her to the peerage. Lady Sophia was the only person in the family who was not pleased, for she could not vanquish the envy she felt at the good fortune of her sister, and continued to give vent to it by the most depreciating remarks on him by whom she would gladly have been selected in place of her sister.

The *ennui* Lord Fitzwarren had experienced in the society of his *soi-disant* friend, Mr. Webworth, ever since that gentleman's health had given way under the effects of repletion, had reconciled him in some degree to the notion of the inevitable step he was about to take. "One thing is certain," thought he, "I never can be half so bored by Livy as I have been by Weby, and, after all, travelling by oneself is a very dull thing. A man must marry one time or another, and once over there is an end of it, so I don't funk half so much now that the thing draws near as I did when I first got my neck into the halter; and, when I see a good-looking young fellow like Mountserratt, and a marquis into the bargain, with a much larger fortune than mine—a fellow that might have married any girl

he fancied—tied up to such a creature as he has wedded, I think myself devilish fortunate in making no worse a marriage than with Livy, who, though no beauty, is well enough in her way, and, moreover, is of suitable station to my own in life. People can't say I have married beneath myself, or that there is anything ridiculous about her; so, after all, I don't see why I shouldn't put a good face on the matter, and make the best of it."

It was in consequence of this train of reasoning that Lord Fitzwarren met the Wellerby family in general, and his future bride in particular, with more cordiality than they or even the Lady Olivia herself had anticipated. He related to them the *ennui* to which he had been exposed during his journey from Venice with his friend Weby, a narration that drew forth not only the sympathy of Lady Wellerby, but elicited a moral on the annoyances of travelling companions, and more especially those who had not carriages of their own, and "all other appliances to boot," for ensuring the perfect independance of each traveller, by affording the power of separating the moment it became desirable. In short, Lady Wellerby proved, at least to her own satisfaction, that poverty, if not a crime of the deepest dye, ought to be considered as quite as strong a reason for avoiding those afflicted with it as if it were, and was eloquent in detailing the various *désagréments* it entailed on the unthinking persons who associated with its victims. Lord Fitzwarren would willingly have dispensed with the lengthy homily with which his future mother-in-law indulged him on this occasion, and was pleased that Lady Olivia did not join in it; while Lord Wellerby remarked that, "for his part, experience had taught him always to avoid forming any intimacies with persons who were not rich, that he might be spared the unpleasant feeling of always expecting that they were about to demand assistance from him, a feeling" (added he) "most destructive to comfort."

"Hang me, if ever such a fear entered my head," said Lord Fitzwarren; "and I hardly know a pleasanter feeling than that experienced when one is able to rescue a friend out of a scrape."

"How like you, dear George!" observed Lady Olivia, looking at him with well-counterfeited tenderness; "you are so noble-minded and kind-hearted;" a compliment that drew from his lordship the remark that he was no better than a hundred fellows of his acquaintance, but that she was a deuced good girl.

"You are not, perhaps, aware that our old friend Axy Beaulieu is now the Marquis of Mountserratt?" said Lord Fitzwarren.

"Indeed!" exclaimed both the young ladies at once.

"He will be an excellent *parti*," observed Lady Wellerby, whose thoughts always reverted to good matches.

"Yes, a capital one," said her husband, and he glanced towards Lady Sophia, with a complacent reminiscence of the marquis having, when Lord Alexander Beaulieu, paid some attention to one of the sisters. The lady bridled, and affected a certain consciousness of comprehending the meaning of her father's glance; and Lady Olivia pouted her lips and tossed her head at the mere supposition that the attentions of the person in question could have been directed to any one but herself, to whom, in reality, they were addressed.

"Mountserratt is no longer a good *parti* for any one," said Lord Fitzwarren, "for he is already married."

"Married!" echoed the ladies; "and to whom?"

Great was their astonishment when the tale was related to them, and their indignation nearly equalled their surprise. That such a vulgar creature as the dreadful Irishwoman should have entrapped a man like their friend, and, above all, now that he was a marquis, filled them with anger, and they uttered sundry invectives against the deserted bride, who they pronounced to have richly merited the severest punishment.

"Come, come, don't throw all the blame on the poor woman," said Lord Fitzwarren. "If there was any entrapping in the case, it was not on her side, I can assure you, for the marriage was entirely Axy's seeking, and not hers."

"How dreadful to think that he cannot get rid of this odious *més-alliance*!" observed Lady Sophia, turning up her eyes.

"And how horrid to have his title borne by such a person!" remarked Lady Wellerby.

"Yes; this vulgar Irishwoman, whom you were so shocked at, will take precedence of you all," said Lord Wellerby, spitefully.

"How can you contemplate our ever coming in contact with her?" demanded his wife.

"The Marchioness of Mountserratt will become a personage, you may be assured," replied Lord Wellerby. "Rich, with high rank, and hospitable as she is said to be, she will become a lion; and in England, you know, crowds are always ready to rush to see a lion feed;" and his lordship chuckled at his own attempt at a joke.

"The poor woman is in this hotel," said Lord Fitzwarren, "and

I, having served as bridesman at her wedding, have thought it only decent to pay her a visit. She is very amusing, in her way, and excessively jolly: bears the desertion of her lord with great equanimity: and consoles herself with having secured a marquise, though she has lost a marquis. It would be really very good-natured of you, Lady Wellerby to call on her. I will introduce you."

"Not for the world! What would people say were I to take such a step? The very notion of it alarms me."

"I see nothing alarming in it, and proposed it because, knowing that you like a rubber of whist, and that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to make up one at Naples, I thought she would be quite an acquisition, and being in the hotel, that you could make up your rubber every night."

"Does she play well?" asked Lady Wellerby, anxiously.

"No, not well: but she does not object to high stakes," replied Lord Fitzwarren, biting his lips, to conceal a smile at the bait he had thrown out for his future mother-in-law having so well succeeded, and at his having asserted that of which he was in total ignorance, namely, whether or not the lady in question played whist at all.

"If you, my dear lord, really wish it," said Lady Wellerby, "I will vanquish my own repugnance, and call on this person; but you must take it as one of the strongest proofs I could give of my desire to please you."

"Or to make up a rubber," added Lord Wellerby, with a sneer.

"You believe every one to be as devoted to cards as you are," retorted the lady, angrily; "but, luckily, Lord Fitzwarren knows that in this instance I am influenced solely by my desire to do that which will be agreeable to him."

"I will call on the marchioness to-morrow, and announce the honour you intend her," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"And, if you can manage to get up a rubber, pray do, for it will help one to get through the evening," rejoined Lord Wellerby.

"Rather than you should be disappointed, I will play a rubber or two myself," said Lord Fitzwarren, good-naturedly, and not sorry to get some means of abridging the evenings he found hang so heavily on his hands in the family circle of the Wellerbys.

The following day, pursuant to his promise, he paid a visit to the

Marchioness of Mountserratt, and asked her leave to bring Lady Wellerby to call on her.

"What!" demanded she, "is not that the ugly old woman with the plain daughters, who were so uncivil to me at Rome? I am now higher in rank than they are, and I don't think it would be right of me to condescend to make their acquaintance."

"It is they who wish to make yours, my dear lady," replied he; "and Lady Wellerby is a lady of fashion, who can be very useful to you. I am going to marry one of her daughters; and, as you and I are now friends, I should like to make you acquainted with my future wife and her family."

"Well, my lord, I can refuse you nothing; but if you knew how ill they behaved...."

"We must forgive and forget, my dear lady, and take ladies of fashion as we find them. By the by, do you play whist?"

"Yes, but not over well."

"Then you will have a famous opportunity of improving your play, if you practice with Lady Wellerby; but don't play over high, for I shouldn't like you to lose your money."

"I shouldn't mind if I did, if it were only just to show this lady of fashion, who thinks so much of herself, how little I care about money, and how well I can afford to lose it."

When Lord Fitzwarren had taken his leave, the Marchioness of Mountserratt rang for Mrs. Bernard; and, no sooner had that lady made her appearance, than she told her to dress immediately in her best robe, for that visitors of great distinction were coming to call, and that it was necessary that her *dame de compagnie* should make a proper appearance. "Now, mind you make no mistake but address me always by my title. What's the good of being a marchioness if I am not spoken to with proper respect? Are the prayer-books and bible come back with the coronets on 'em?"

"No, madam."

"There, again, you forget. Why can't you acquire the habit of always saying 'your ladyship?' Send for the books, for I can't appear at the minister's chapel on Sunday, if the coronets are not on the prayer-books. I also wish to have them engraved on every book I have, and everything I use. Are my visiting cards come from the engraver's?"

"Yes, your ladyship."

"Let me see them."

The cards were brought, but the marchioness's ire knew no

bounds, when she saw that they were simply stamped with the words, "The Marchioness of Mountserratt."

"This stupid mistake must be your doing," she exclaimed, her face becoming crimson with anger. "Why did you not have 'The Most Noble' put before my title? Don't you know that a marquis or marchioness is entitled to be styled 'The Most Noble?'"

"It is not usual to have it inscribed on their cards, I assure your ladyship."

"How should you know? Did a marchioness ever leave a card on you, I should like to know? I am sure not one ever did, for marchionesses are not to be met with every day in the week, I know, and when they are, they know better than to disgrace their high rank, by visiting people without titles."

Mrs. Bernard attempted no reply, well knowing how utterly useless it would be, and her despotic lady received her silence as an assent to her own conjecture.

Justine was summoned to a consultation on the toilette in which the visit from Lady Wellerby was to be received, and Mrs. Bernard was dismissed to make the necessary changes in hers.

"A very grand lady, Justin, is coming to visit me to-day, and I wish to be very elegantly dressed to receive her. What had I best wear?"

"I think, *madame la marquise* is very well dressed at present, and *très-élégante*."

"Oh! no, Justin. Only see how badly this gown looks, and the lace *volants* as you call them, are quite tumbled. Suppose I put on my organ dress?"

"*Madame la marquise* means her *organdi robe*."

"Yes, yes, that's what I meant. *That* has beautiful lace, and looks more like a bride's dress."

"But as de bridegroom has gone away, I think de less *madame la marquise* reminds de people dat she is a bride de better," observed the impertinent *femme de chambre*, with the most provoking coolness.

"But though he *has* gone, he could not take his title with him, or at least I am Marchioness of Mountserratt in spite of his teeth, and with plenty of money to keep up my high rank, so I must dress accordingly."

"But *madame la marquise* must remember dat persons of high rank consider it very *calgaire* to be overdressed in de morning."

"It is only those who can't afford it that have such nonsensical

notions in their heads. I'll wear my organ dress, with the beautiful lace flounces, and my fine Valenciennes *canes you*."

"*Madame la marquise* do always pronounce dat vord wrong. It is *canezou*, and not *canes you*."

"What does it signify! You know what I mean, and that is sufficient. I'll put on my last morning cap from Paris, with the pink ribands, and mind you have the pocket handkerchief, with the coronet in the corner, for me to hold in my hand. I am determined, Justin, to have large coronets embroidered in the four corners of my handkerchief, for then every one can see them; whereas, when there is only one corner with a coronet, I am forced to have that one always shown."

"But I must not let *madame de marquise* do vat vill make de peoples laugh. No one ever puts more dan von coronet on deir *mouchoir de poche*, and it would be considered very *vulgaire*, and like a *parvenue* to do so."

"But how could a marchioness be vulgar, Justin? It is only common people without titles that are vulgar. The harristocracy are always considered genteel and elegant, do what they will, and set the fashion in all things."

Justine shook her head, and looked incredulous, but she did not further argue with her obtuse mistress, from two motives—the first, because she believed that lady incapable of comprehending reason; and the second, that she wished to avoid displeasing her, lest her so doing might check the generosity by which she so greatly benefitted, and which depended on her lady's being kept in good humour. Acting on the principle of conciliation, the artful *femme de chambre* offered no more objections to the too expensive dress in which the marchioness chose to attire herself, although she could not help shrugging up her shoulders, and raising her eyes towards the ceiling, when she beheld that personage leave her dressing-room, to take her place in the *salon*, to be in readiness to receive her expected visitors.

"*Oh, mon Dieu! quelle femme, quelle femme!*" exclaimed she; and taking her place before the mirror, she arranged her cap, and smiled complacently at the image it reflected. "Vat a moche better marquise I should make," murmured she, and she drew herself up with an air of dignity. "I have a *tournure élégante*, an air *distingué*, and a *je ne sais quoi* dat an English woman never can acquire. Yes, I should make a moche better marquise, and never be laughed at as dis stoopide creature is. I vonder if dat *mauvais sujet*, Turne-

fort, ever tink of me? *Tel maître, tel valet. Mais, après tout*, all is for de best, as de *philosophes* say, and do dat bad man, de marquise, has decamped, and robbed me of my five tousand pounds, I may make moche more money vid dis *bête de femme*, now dat dere is no extravagant husband to lay hold of her fortune for himself, and to cut short her expenses."

At about four o'clock Lady Wellerby, escorted by her future son-in-law, Lord Fitzwarren, was ushered into the *salon* of the Marchioness of Mountserratt, whom they found reclining in a *bergère*, with a richly-bound book in her hand which she was affecting to be deeply engaged in. The servant had twice announced the presence of her visiters before the lady appeared to be conscious of their proximity, and when she did at last condescend to notice them, her assumption of dignity was so ludicrous that Lord Fitzwarren could with difficulty control his risible faculties. Having presented the ladies to each other, the marchioness motioned Lady Wellerby to a chair, and said, "How do you like Naples, countess?"

"Exceedingly. I hope that you find it agreeable."

"Why, to tell you the truth, I can't say much for it. The sights here are just as dull as at Rome. I was persuaded to go up Mount—I forget the name of it, but I mean the burning mountain, and a tiresome job it was, and when I got to the top, I could have fancied myself in Old Ireland again when one of the men called out, 'Look down on the crather,' just for all the world as the Irish beggars do, when they're asking charity. I saw nothing worth the trouble when I had got there: merely a hollow in the mountain, with smoke and blue flames now and then springing up from it, which reminded me of a huge punch-bowl, nearly empty, with a little burning whisky at the bottom."

"A capital comparison, by Jove!" exclaimed Lord Fitzwarren, much amused by the effort Lady Wellerby was making to conceal her horror and disgust at the brogue and vulgarity of the lady she came to visit.

"What has most amused you at Naples?" asked he, desirous of drawing out the marchioness.

"The lazzaretto going about the streets in curicolos," replied the lady, mistaking the word *lazzaroni* for *lazzaretto*.

"You have, I suppose, seen Pompeii?" said Lady Wellerby.

"Yes, countess, and a rubbishing old place it is, not at all worth going to see."

"If you have no engagement for this evening, Lady Mountserratt, perhaps you would come and pass it with us," said Lady Wellerby. "Lord Wellerby and my daughters will be glad to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

"You are mighty kind, countess, and I don't care if I do. At what hour do you take tea?"

"At ten o'clock. We generally make up a rubber of whist."

"Well, as I see you wish to be sociable at present, countess, perhaps you and your family, and his lordship here, will come and take pot-luck with me to-morrow, without any ceremony."

"I don't know whether we have formed any engagement for to-morrow or not," replied Lady Wellerby; "but if you will permit me to consult Lord Wellerby, I will inform you this evening whether we can avail ourselves of your invitation."

Lady Wellerby arose to depart, and the marchioness said, "Then why are you in such a hurry, countess? seeing your company is very agreeable to me, now that you are no longer on the high horse, as you were at Rome, but civil and polite, as one lady should be to another."

Lady Wellerby's cheek became tinged with red at this reference to the scene at the Corso during the Carnival, but, like a woman of the world, she quickly recovered her presence of mind, and said, "Ah! I did not then know who you were, Lady Mountserratt, and one must be so particular in a place like Rome, where all sorts of persons are thrown in one's way, that you must excuse me for not having sought your acquaintance, as I should have done had I been aware of your merit."

"Yes, countess, we of the haristocracy must be very particular who we make acquaintance with. So let bygones be bygones, and it shan't be my fault if we don't become good neighbours. 'Twill be a great comfort to me to have a friend like you, left alone as I have been by the marquis, whose conduct to me has been very strange and unkind, as his friend here, Lord Fitzwarren, can tell you."

"You must not allow your spirits to be depressed," replied Lady Wellerby, affecting something like cordiality in her manner.

"Faith and I won't, countess. I'm not so mean-spirited. I can do without him as well as he can without me, I can assure him, and as I have plenty of money to keep up my title, I mean to enjoy myself as a marchioness ought."

"You are quite right, my dear madam," observed Lady Wel-

lerby, and, escaping from the marchioness, she took her leave, heartily disgusted with the vulgarity of her new acquaintance, but determined that it should not prevent her from further cultivating it, if, as she hoped, she could induce her to make up a rubber every night while they remained at Naples, and that her own skill at cards should be found so superior as to ensure her success over her adversary."

"You left me in a pleasant dilemma," said the marchioness to Mrs. Bernard, as that enduring person entered the room, soon after Lady Wellerby had left it. "Why were you not here in your place, as I ordered you to be, when my noble visitors came?"

"The handle of the door of my room being broken, I could not let myself out; and, although I rang the bell several times, no one came to release me until the moment before I presented myself here, madam."

"You have always some stupid excuse or other for neglecting your duty; and, if I were not the most patient and good-natured person in the world, I should have long since discharged you. But remember that, although, when plain Mrs. Maclaurin, I overlooked your negligence, I will not, as a marchioness, do so; so I advise you to be more careful, if you value your place. I have invited the Earl and Countess of Wellerby and their daughters, with the Earl of Fitzwarren, to dine here to-morrow. I wish to give them the best dinner and the choicest wines that Naples can furnish, so you must see the landlord and give him the necessary instructions."

Having issued her orders to her timid *dame de compagnie*, the marchioness retired to her dressing-room, to hold a consultation with her *femme de chambre* on the dress to be worn that evening.

"I wish to be very elegant, Justin," said she, "for these people are of the first fashion; quite tip-top people; none of your shabby-genteels. I can assure you, but real lords and ladies. Oh! Justin, how I long to see my name in the peerage! but that won't be until a new one comes out. I wonder, if I was to write to some friend in England to offer the man who makes the book some money to bring it out immediately, whether he would?"

"In England, *madame la marquise*, everything can be done for money."

"Yes, Justin, the English are such clever, sensible people; they know how to value money, and those who possess it."

"Oui, *madame la marquise*, dey are so clever, dat dey nevare

value dose dat have no money, whatever good qualities dey may possess; but let a person be riche, vid ever so many faults, and dey vill all *faire la cour* to him."

"What is *faire le cure*, Justin?"

"Dat is to flatter, to vat you call toady, *madame la marquise*."

"What do you think I had best wear this evening, Justin?"

"A *robe de mousseline*, vid *une écharpe de dentelle*."

"Do speak English, Justin; you know I don't understand French."

"Vell, den, a robe of muslin, vid a lace scarf, and a *chapeau* of *paille de ris*, vid flowers."

"No, that would not be elegant enough. Any one might afford to wear a dress like that, Justin, and I want to wear what only a grand and rich lady could have."

"But *madame la marquise* forgets dat de grande and riche ladies like sometimes to be very simply dressed, *surtout* for *des petites soirées*."

"More fools they. A grand lady should always show by her dress that she is one, and not look like the wife of a mere gentleman. I'll wear a white lace dress over a pink satin slip, a pink hat and feathers, and my emeralds set in diamonds. I'll let 'em see what el'egant thing I have."

"Ah! if *madame la marquise* would be governed by me, I would invent such *charmantes* dresses for her, dat all de vorld would say nobody has such *recherchées toilettes*."

"No, Justin, your taste is a great deal too simple for me. I like to be always in full dress; for what's the use of fine things except to wear them?"

Great was the surprise of Lady Wellerby and her daughters that evening, when the marchioness entered their *salon* attired in a style fit only for a large assembly. The plainness and simplicity of their dresses might have shown their visiter the unsuitableness of hers, had she been less obtuse; but, far from being embarrassed by the contrast which their costumes offered to her own, she was pleased by it. Lady Wellerby presented her lord and daughters to the marchioness; and Lord Fitzwarren, as an older acquaintance, cordially shook hands with her, and complimented her on the splendour and taste of her toilette, while the young ladies drew themselves up, and eyed her askance.

Cards were soon introduced. Lord and Lady Wellerby proposed being partners, saying that they never played against each

other, and the marchioness and Lord Fitzwarren sat down to oppose them.

“What stakes do you wish to play for?” asked Lady Wellerby.

“Whatever you like,” replied the marchioness, with a careless air.

“Suppose we say louis points, and five on the rubber?” said Lady Wellerby.

“Agreed,” replied the marchioness.

“You and I will settle for our stakes,” said Lord Wellerby, bowing to the lady, “and Lady Wellerby will count with Lord Fitzwarren.”

The mode in which the marchioness held her cards and sorted them denoted that she was not much skilled in the game; but she had only played a few minutes before it became evident that she was ignorant of the common rules of whist. The eyes of Lord Wellerby sparkled with pleasure as he noticed the gross errors she committed; and his lady wife’s manner became almost affectionate towards her, as game after game, and rubber after rubber, was lost by her bad play.

“Were I you,” said Lord Fitzwarren, “I would not play so high. for, be assured, you are no match for our adversaries, who are remarkably good players.”

“I shall soon improve with a little practice,” replied the marchioness, drawing forth from a richly-embroidered reticule a spangled purse well filled with louis: “but, as I like to pay as I lose, let me settle for the rubbers lost before we commence another.”

But even the whole contents of her well-stored purse was insufficient to pay half the sum she had lost. Lord Fitzwarren made a note of his debt to his future *belle mère*, most desirous never to play again with the marchioness for a partner, while her opponents, delighted beyond measure at having found one who not only afforded them so easy a victory, but who lost her money without seeming to care about it, were all politeness to her. They accepted her invitation to dinner for the next day, promising themselves a renewal of the good fortune of that evening, and separated at midnight.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The proverb says that gold has wings,
And every day's experience brings
The pithy truth before our eyes,
As Fortune's tide doth ebb and rise.
What pleasant paths to ruin tend,
Various, but reaching the same end!
The man that brooks not to behold
Distress, and freely yields his gold
With noble generosity
Too far indulged, will ruin see.
Another road is a fine taste,
By which men thousands soon may waste,
And brick and mortar, all will find,
But seldom leave much wealth behind.

Strathern was more surprised than pleased when he drove, the day after his arrival in London, to see the mansion that had been erected for him during his absence. Its magnitude, and the costliness of its architectural decorations, so far exceeded his intentions, that, little versed as he was in such matters, a cursory glance convinced him that the architect he had employed, and on whom he now recollected, with alarm, he had imposed no restrictions with regard to expenditure, had greatly abused his confidence. The mansion was of vast dimensions, and would require a large sum for its completion. True, he had seen a drawing before his departure, to give him, as the architect said, a notion of what Strathern House was to be, and he had approved it; but buildings look so different on paper and in reality, that Strathern never imagined that the elegant looking dwelling drawn for his approval could grow into the palatial one he was now gazing on, with more alarm for the wide breach it would inevitably make in his fortune than with any satisfaction at its splendour. Had his engagement to Louisa Sydney still subsisted, the thought that this magnificent abode would be shared with her might have reconciled him to the large outlay its erection and completion would require, but for him—a single, a lonely man, and doomed, in all human probability, to continue so all his life—a palace like this seemed useless and absurd; and, having wandered through its lofty and spacious suites of apart

ments, in every one of which fresh proofs of the reckless extravagance of the architect were exhibited, he left the house to keep an appointment with his solicitor, nervous and alarmed in anticipation of the disclosures which he felt convinced awaited him.

The interview with Mr. Papworth proved that his anticipations were well founded, for that gentleman's first observation was, "I have been expecting to hear from you, sir, for some time, in reply to the letters I wrote to you to Italy, informing you of the course Mr. Drinkwater, your architect, was pursuing. I had, unfortunately, been called to Ireland, on business that detained me there several months. Finding, during my stay there, that the demands for money from Mr. Drinkwater were to a very large amount, I hastened, on my return, to see the mansion he was erecting. I confess to you, sir, that its vast extent and its unnecessary magnificence surprised and alarmed me. I knew you wished for a fine house, decorated with taste and elegance, but I did not think you wished for a palace suited only to the establishment of a sovereign prince. I stated my opinion to Mr. Drinkwater, requested him to await your answer to a letter I should write to you that day before he advanced still more with the work, and declined making him any further payment, although he urged me to do so with great pertinacity; but, far from attending to my request, he has gone on with the same reckless disregard to expense as before so that I am glad you have returned, that a check may be imposed on him ere it be too late for your interests. It is a great pity, sir, that you had not exacted a contract for the building, and made an express condition that a certain sum should not be exceeded."

Never, previously, had Strathern felt so aware of the imprudence of which he had been guilty, in employing a man of whom he knew nothing, except that he was recommended to him as an architect of good taste by a young nobleman of his acquaintance. There is something very humiliating in having indisputable proofs of our own want of sense and judgment brought coolly and dispassionately before us, and by one, too, of whose abilities, in comparison with our own, we had entertained no very exalted opinion.

Mr. Papworth, the solicitor and agent of Strathern, was remarkable for only two peculiarities; the first was a degree of caution which, whether the result of experience with regard to mankind in general, or solely founded on a knowledge of one specimen of the genus, self, induced him to look on all who approached him on business as designing persons, intent on taking some unfair advan-

tage of him or his employer, and against whom it behoved him to be on his guard; the second peculiarity was a sort of triumphant self-complacency, invariably exhibited whenever his clients, having ventured to exercise their own sagacity without an appeal to his, found themselves by the result in any difficulty. Then would he say, with his most provoking look of self-satisfaction, "You see, sir, the consequence of not having consulted me;" or, "Had my advice been taken, this could not have occurred;" and, however obvious the truth of these assertions might be to those to whom they were addressed, they produced so little comfort under the annoyance from which they were suffering, that few, if any, of his clients left Mr. Papworth on such occasions, without having experienced a painful sense of humiliation, added to the previous vexation, which was ill calculated to induce that confidence, which it is almost, if not quite, as essential to have in one's legal adviser as in one's medical one. Strathern felt this keenly, while he listened to the animadversions of his solicitor on the necessity of precaution, or, in other words, the prudence of never acting on his own judgment, the fallibility of which his want of caution with regard to Mr. Drinkwater offered so striking a proof.

"It is of little use to dwell on my oversight in this affair," replied he, biting his nether lip, and evincing sundry other symptoms of impatience; "you had much better tell me what it is best to do, in order at once to check Mr. Drinkwater's proceedings."

"I will write a letter, sir, which you will be so good as to sign, in which I will prohibit his advancing any further with the decorative part (the rest you are aware is completed) until he has furnished an accurate account of the expenses incurred up to this date."

The letter was forthwith written, Strathern's signature affixed to it, and he left Mr. Papworth, if not a wiser, at least a more dissatisfied man, than when he met him. The first person he encountered, as he walked in a listless mood up St. James's Street, was Mr. Rhymer.

"You are a fortunate man," said that gentleman to him, with one of his most sepulchral smiles. "I saw this morning, for the first time, your splendid palace, and congratulate you on being the owner of a residence that so far exceeds, both in extent and grandeur, every ducal one in England. You are much to be envied, and now only require a bride with the purse of Fortunatus to enable you to maintain a retinue suitable to such an abode, for your own

fortune, large as I have always heard it to be, must have sustained a wide breach in the erection of such a building, to say nothing of the ruinously expensive decorations. I was making a calculation in my mind of the fearful amount which your purchase at Rome, added to this palace, must come to, and have only to observe that I hope you won't verify the old proverb that *unwise* men build houses for *wise* ones to dwell in."

"I believe the proverb uses the more homely epithet of *fools*, which you have so politely turned into *unwise* men," replied Strathern, endeavouring to conceal the annoyance he felt. "I thank you for the hopes so kindly expressed—that I may not verify the old proverb—and trust that you will see the fulfilment of your good wishes, and spend some pleasant days at Strathern House when it is completed."

"I thought of her who I once fancied was to be its mistress when I looked at it this morning. Poor young creature! Its splendour would ill accord with her fallen fortune. You broke off your engagement at Rome, I believe, which was fortunate, as a portionless bride would not suit any man who has built such a palace as yours, unless, indeed, he possessed the fortune of *Croesus*."

"Fallen fortunes! poor young creature! To whom do you refer?" demanded Strathern, with breathless emotion.

"To whom should I refer but to Miss Sydney? You surely must have heard that, through a flaw in her grandfather's will, she loses the whole property to which she was believed to be heiress."

"Is it possible, and where is she? Tell me, I entreat you?" demanded Strathern eagerly, forgetting all his chagrin in the engrossing interest excited for her who still reigned triumphantly over his heart.

"Why, you positively look as if you were more pleased than sorry at the news I have given you," observed Mr. Rhymer, narrowly examining Strathern's countenance. "Are you so hard-hearted as to rejoice in the fallen fortunes of one you once professed to love? or is it that you have still enough of the romantic sentiments of youth left as to desire to atone to Miss Sydney for the fickleness of that blind jade, Dame Fortune, by offering to lay yours at her feet?"

"This is not a time to trifle," replied Strathern gravely. "If you know where Mrs. and Miss Sydney at present reside, pray tell me; if not, inform me where I am most likely to gain intelligence."

"I honour you for this anxiety," said Mr. Rhymer, his pale and

saturnine face relaxing into an expression of cordial good will; "and I would gladly give you the information you seek were it in my power; but I regret to say I really do not know where these ladies are, nor am I acquainted with any one who does. My solicitor is, I think, on terms of amity with theirs, who is, I understand, a very worthy man, and I will ask him to inquire where they now are."

"A thousand thanks," said Strathern, cordially pressing the attenuated hand of Mr. Rhymer until that gentleman's countenance betrayed the pain the warm grasp occasioned.

"Hold, young sir," observed he, extending his fingers as if to restore animation to them; "you forget that I am neither young, nor in love. God bless me, how you have cramped my poor hand!"

"Pray pardon me, dear Mr. Rhymer. I hope I have not seriously injured your hand?"

"Dear Mr. Rhymer!" reiterated the cynic. "How strangely the word dear attached to my name sounds! No one uses it to me except distressed authors wanting to borrow money, and young ladies desirous of poems for their albums, which last, by the by, I never indulge. Where shall I send to you when I hear from my solicitor?"

"To the Clarendon Hotel."

"I am going to dine with the Duke of Wellington to-day, have a command from the palace for to-morrow, am engaged to the Sutherlands for the day after, and to the Buccleughs for Saturday, or I should request you to come and dine with me on one of those days; but if you will breakfast with me on Sunday you will meet a few clever people."

"On Sunday it will not be in my power."

"Oh! you go to church, I suppose. A very good habit, which I, somehow or other, have got out of; and at my age it is so difficult to fall back into old habits again. Well, *addio!* You shall hear from me the moment I get the information you require;" and off walked Mr. Rhymer, leaving Strathern to pursue his promenade alone.

As he turned into Bond Street, intending to go to his hotel, he met the Marquis of Mountserrat, mounted on a very fine horse, and followed by a groom, who rode an equally good one. No sooner did he perceive Strathern than he alighted, and, giving his horse to the charge of his servant, advanced with extended hand to meet him. "My dear fellow, I am charmed to see you," exclaimed he,

shaking his old acquaintance warmly by the hand. "I have just been to the Clarendon in search of you, having this morning read in the *Post* of your arrival at that hotel. Town very full. How different from Rome, that city of eternal dullness! *A propos* of Rome, how have you left all our friends there! Are you yet become a Benedict, or are you only on the point of entering the holy state, as grave people call it?"

A few words sufficed to inform him that neither supposition was correct.

"And where are Mrs. and Miss Sydney now?" inquired Lord Mountserratt, with affected carelessness.

"I really cannot inform you," replied Strathern, "for I only arrived in London yesterday, and as yet do not know the whereabouts of any of my friends."

"Some of our old chums said they saw you at the Opera last night, but I was so taken up with a new flame of mine there, that I had eyes only for her. You are a prude, I know of old, Strathern, so I will not shock your chaste ears by recounting to you my *bonnes fortunes*."

"Thanks for this forbearance," said Strathern. "I plead guilty to the charge of prudery, if it consists in an extreme antipathy to listening to the narrations of love passages with singers and opera dancers."

"I fly at higher game, I assure you, and leave such *bonnes fortunes* to worn-out old *roués*, and boys just escaped from college. Such a woman, Strathern! Quite the rage. Half the men about town at her feet. Am I not a lucky dog to have got into the good graces of Lady.....?"

"Hold!" said Strathern; "I beg to be left in ignorance of the name of the unfortunate person whose fame and honour you so little respect as to compromise both by your unsolicited disclosures."

"Why, my good fellow, all London knows it. They talk of nothing else at the clubs."

"Then it is the less necessary that you should proclaim it," observed Strathern, coldly.

"Look, there is that fellow Olliphant; he has lost all his fortune on the turf and at play, and we, his old friends, are obliged to cut him, lest he should ask us to lend him money. What a bore it is that people should fancy that because they were known to one in their prosperous days, and that one lived on habits of friendship with them when they were rich, that it is to continue when they get

poor! Dogs are said to detest beggars, but, hang me, if I don't hate poor acquaintances still more! Don't you, Strathern?"

"No," replied Strathern, gravely, "I do not, and you need not have asked the question, for you may remember that when you were in the category of that unfortunate class, I evinced no symptoms of dislike towards you."

"*A propos* of which," said the marquis, his cheek growing red at this reproof, "I believe I am your debtor for a few hundreds or so, which I will repay you."

"And which I will transfer to poor Olliphant, whom I remember a kind-hearted, generous friend to all his old college chums who required his assistance."

"Be assured you will find him a regular bore if you do, for he is one of the most unreasonable fellows alive. Why—would you believe it?—when he found himself regularly done up, he had the coolness to expect that all those whom he had formerly assisted should then come to his aid, and that those who had won large sums from him ought to refund a few hundreds, in order to enable him to retire to Van Diemen's Land, or some other outlandish place. I suggested to him that he might find a mode of getting sent there without our parting with our money, and so thought the rest of our clique, and we declined granting his request, which he chose to take as an affront—nay, more, had the folly to want to fix a quarrel and duel on one of us. This we also declined; for really, if one was to consent to fight every fellow to whom one refuses to lend money, a man would have a pleasant time of it."

"And this is the man whom you used all to proclaim the best fellow in the world—the most generous and hospitable, to attend whose *recherchés* dinners and *petits soupers* you threw over every other invitation—whose purse, horses, and carriages were always at your service!"

"*Que voulez-vous, mon ami? Ainsi va le monde.* Life is too short, money too precious, and pleasure too engrossing, to permit a sensible man to throw away any portion of either of the first two on fools who did not know how to husband them. 'Every man for himself,' is my motto, and I observe it is one now very generally adopted."

Strathern withdrew his arm from Lord Mountserratt's, so thoroughly disgusted with his undisguised selfishness that he could no longer repress the emotions it excited in his breast, and, coldly wishing him good morning, he walked away, leaving his unworthy

acquaintance surprised and somewhat offended at his coldness. He had nearly reached the Clarendon Hotel, when he again saw Mr. Olliphant walking on the opposite side of the street, no longer the well-dressed, volatile young man he had formerly been, but plainly, if not shabbily, attired, and with a grave and pensive aspect. Strathern, filled with pity for the altered position of one whom only two brief years before he had known in a brilliant one, crossed the street, determined to accost him; but, so habituated had the unhappy Olliphant become to the avoidance of his former *soi-disant* friends that, although he recognised Strathern at a glance, he bent his eyes to the ground to avoid the humiliation of being cut by him, as he had constantly been by their mutual acquaintances ever since his fallen fortunes had been known to them; and the blood that mounted in his cheek betrayed that he was still keenly alive to the unkindness he anticipated.

"Do you not know me, my dear Olliphant?" demanded Strathern, extending his hand, and seizing that of his old acquaintance, who, agreeably surprised by the friendliness of his manner, returned the pressure with great warmth, while he murmured something about his fear that Strathern might have forgotten him. "I am living here," said Strathern, as they reached the door of the Clarendon Hotel. "Come in, my dear fellow, and let us have a little chat together."

"I saw you walking with the Marquis of Mountserratt," observed Mr. Olliphant; "and as he is one of those among my old acquaintance who have behaved the most unkindly to me, I feared that he might have prejudiced you against me, as I saw him pointing me out to you."

Strathern drew from the unhappy man a statement of his case. It was a painful, but a too common one, the result of imprudence, and generosity misapplied and abused, followed by the never-failing consequence of an attempt to retrieve shattered fortunes by a recourse to the gaming-table and the turf, which achieved his total ruin.

"I had hoped that those who had profited by my former prodigality, and won my last thousands, madly staked to avert the evil which their loss so rapidly accomplished, would have refunded a few hundreds to enable me to go to Australia or Van Diemen's Land to seek a livelihood. But they refused, and added insult to the refusal. Oh! if I could but live the last few years over again, how different would be my conduct. But, alas! I saw not my errors,

and knew not the real nature and character of those on whom I so prodigally heaped benefits until it was too late to profit by my bitter experience. And for these very men I quarrelled with my excellent uncle, who warned me of their heartlessness and selfishness, which I, fool that I was, would not credit, and obstinately resisting his counsel, the wisdom of which every day's experience has since convinced me of, he has cast me off for ever."

The kind heart of Strathern was touched by the narration of his luckless friend, and before they parted, he not only bestowed on him present aid, but pledged himself to give him five thousand pounds to carry his scheme of emigration into effect. Poor Olliphant left him overpowered by gratitude for his kindness, and the delicacy evinced towards his feelings by the manner in which it was conferred; and Strathern experienced more satisfaction in the consciousness of having performed a good action than he had known for some time. Would the selfish and sordid mortals who hoard useless thousands, but sometimes try the effect of expending some portion of them in relieving the miseries of the unfortunate, they would find in the self-satisfaction conferred by such generosity a greater happiness than the contemplation of their wealth ever afforded them. Their sleep would be more calm and refreshing, and their awakings more cheerful.

A week had elapsed before Strathern was furnished with a statement of the expense incurred in the building of his palace. When, however, it was laid before him by Mr. Papworth, the amount far exceeded his worst anticipations.

"I see you are astonished, sir," said that gentleman, "and so I confess am I, although I was prepared to find that Mr. Drinkwater had not neglected to take advantage of the confidence, you will permit me to add, so unwisely placed in him.

"One hundred and eighty-five thousand, six hundred and forty-four pounds already expended!" observed Strathern, his face considerably lengthened.

"And an estimate that to complete the mansion, from sixty to eighty thousand pounds more will be required, making, as you will find, sir, no less a sum total than two hundred and sixty-five thousand, six hundred and forty-four pounds, taking for granted that the larger, and not the less, sum noted in the estimate, will be the real amount expended in the completion. A vast, an astounding sum, sir; the interest of which would bring an income of..."

"Pray do not take the trouble of calculating," said Strathern,

impatiently interrupting the self-complacent Mr. Papworth. "The point at present to be considered is, whether there is any means of our satisfying ourselves that this vast expenditure has really been fairly incurred, and whether the sum stated for the completion is not greatly overrated?"

"I can have the building surveyed and valued, and an estimate furnished by another architect, of the money required for its completion. Already has Mr. Drinkwater drawn large sums on account—you, sir, having authorised him to do so, a measure on which, had you done me the honour of consulting me, I should have deemed it my duty to counsel you against. It requires considerable knowledge of the world, and great experience, to enable one to guard against the danger to which every gentleman of large fortune is exposed on first entering society, and it is much to be lamented that you were not disposed to profit by mine, which would, doubtless, have saved you from the ruinous consequences which your misplaced confidence in Mr. Drinkwater is likely to entail."

This perpetual recurrence to his imprudence was so disagreeable to Strathern that he abridged the interview with the sapient Mr. Papworth long before that gentleman was disposed to take his leave, promising himself henceforth to avoid as much as possible all intercourse with him, and to conceal any imprudence, either of omission or commission, from his legal adviser, rather than draw on himself again the indirect reproofs of which he had just had a specimen, or witness the self-complacency exhibited on every occasion by Mr. Papworth. The next day, Strathern called at his banker's, in order to ascertain the state of his accounts there. He anticipated that the balance in his favour would be considerably less than it had ever previously been since he had opened an account there, and had he not been prepared for this fact the grave countenances of the partners of the firm in Lombard Street would have led him to suspect it. The barometer is not a more certain criterion for judging of the weather than a banker's countenance is for ascertaining the state of the balance-sheet of any of those individuals who bank with him. Hitherto, Strathern had been always met with smiles by Messrs. Culpeppar, Lockstone, and Firninger, for he had kept a large sum in their hands, and his drafts had been neither frequent nor of large amount until his departure for the Continent. While there he had paid away vast sums for works of art, and had latterly authorised his friend, Lord Delmington, to draw for all the money he should require. This

last unusual step had greatly alarmed the bankers, who, coupling it with the enormous payments made to Mr. Drinkwater, had come to the conclusion that Mr. Strathern was not likely to be so advantageous a customer as he had hitherto been. The draft for five thousand pounds to the ruined spendthrift Olliphant, whose position was generally known, confirmed their suspicions of the imprudence of his benefactor, hence the solemn bows and formal countenances with which they greeted him when he entered their bank in Lombard Street. To his expressed desire to be furnished with his account, and to be informed at once of the amount of the balance in his favour, he was told that the first command should be obeyed next day, and one of the partners instantly went over the books, in order to fulfil the second.

He soon returned, and reported that only a few hundreds remained in their hands—observed on the scarcity of money in the City, and looked as serious as if he expected that Strathern was about to solicit a large advance. He was, however, greatly relieved by that gentleman telling him that he would order some thousands to be lodged to his credit next day ; and Strathern departed, making sundry wise reflections on the influence of money, and the importance it confers on those who possess it.

CHAPTER XLIV.

O, Nature! they indeed are wise
 Who early learn thy charms to prize,
 And find in rural scenes a bliss
 Those pent in cities ever miss.
 How sweet to rove at early morn,
 'Mid flow'rs that dewdrops bright adorn,
 And hear the birds with jocund glee
 Give forth wild notes of melody;
 Or at the noontide hour to stray,
 Where sunbeams pierce some leafy way;
 Or, musing, cheat the sultry hours
 Beside a fountain's crystal show'rs.
 And when descends the dewy eve,
 And pensive nature seems to grieve
 For day's departure—oh, 'tis sweet
 In fond remembrance then to meet
 The lov'd, the absent—who no more
 Are near to bless us as of yore.
 O, Nature! thou calm thoughts canst give,
 Then let me ever with thee live.

Afflictions that fall but lightly on the young, press heavily on those who have passed the season of youth. Had Louisa Sydney never experienced a disappointment of the heart (and those are the only ones that make a deep impression on the youthful), she might have felt more acutely the change entailed by her altered fortunes; but the regrets for this unlooked-for event were so light, when compared with what she had endured ever since her separation from Strathern, that she bore them with a fortitude that surprised, while it greatly gratified, her mother. Mrs. Sydney passed a sleepless night on that memorable one which saw her and her daughter enter Thames Grove. Her thoughts were all engrossed by the position of her child—reduced from affluence to poverty, and the reflections of how she could best secure her a future competency banished sleep, although never did she stand more in need of its refreshing aid. The savings made from her own private fortune, and which now amounted to a large sum, she determined on devoting to the reimbursement of the money claimed by the heir-at-law to her late husband's fortune. The law would not, it was true, compel this step, but hers was not a mind to be influenced by legal considerations, and even

the desire of appropriating her savings to form a provision for her beloved child, faded away before the stern necessity of that which she felt to be an act of duty. She would at once assign half her income to insure her life for the benefit of her daughter, and this step would secure to her the consolation that when *she* should be no more, Louisa would have sufficient for all the comforts, and many of the luxuries, of life.

This determination removed a load of anxiety from her breast; she wondered that the plan had not sooner suggested itself to her mind, or that Mr. Wandsworth had not thought of it, and soothed by it, she dropped into a gentle slumber as the first beams of morning pierced into her chamber, and the carols of innumerable birds were heard from the garden beneath her window.

No thought of her fallen fortunes weighed on the mind of Louisa Sydney, although she, too, had counted many hours on her pillow before sleep pressed her eyelids; Strathern occupied every thought. How *he* would feel on hearing that she was no longer the rich heiress he once desired to wed, often occurred to her, and, as her eyes glanced around on the simple furniture and chintz hangings of the neat little chamber and bed in which she reclined, she thought that such a dwelling as Thames Grove, different though it was from the stately home she had so lately left, might be a happy, a blessed one, if cheered by the love of him whose presence could have rendered even the humblest abode a scene of felicity to her, while she deemed him worthy of her affection. And then came the oft-repeated, never-solved question of "Why did she still cherish his image in her heart when she could no longer esteem or respect him?"

Was she not weak, and, worse than weak, culpable, in thus continually thinking of him, not as she now knew him to be, fallen and worthless, but as she had believed him to be when she had promised to share his destiny? At length sleep closed her eyes, and her dreams afforded a happiness denied to her waking thoughts. Strathern was again her companion. His words of love once more sounded like sweet music in her ears. He reproached her gently for having ever doubted an affection so fond and true as his, and rejoiced that *her* altered fortunes enabled him to prove the sincerity and disinterestedness of his love by laying himself and fortune at her feet; but, when about to place her hand in his, all her confidence restored, a female figure glided between them, and, seizing Strathern's arm, forced him away, although he struggled to release

himself from her grasp, and turned his eyes with an expression of unutterable tenderness towards herself. A veil, which had hitherto shaded the face of the female, now dropped off; and Louisa recognised, with agony, the beautiful woman with whom she had last seen Strathern—the well remembered face she had first beheld at the Coliseum. She awoke bathed in tears; nevertheless her dream had comforted her, for it had represented him still so dear to her, fond as he had formerly been, and anxious to break from that fair but fallen woman, who kept him from her; and, as she mused on the vision, she felt disposed to accept it as a good omen, until, pensively smiling at her own superstitious weakness in attaching any faith to dreams, she left her pillow. When Mrs. Sydney and her daughter met, each narrowly examined the countenance of the other, with that watchful love which would fain divine by the thoughts, rather than question by words, the state of the feelings. Both had schooled themselves to assume a calmness they were far from feeling, for each wished to conceal the anxiety to which both were a prey, lest the knowledge of it might inflict additional uneasiness on the other.

“Did you sleep well, dearest mother?” asked Louisa, as she embraced her parent.

“Yes, dearest, my room was so quiet, and my bed so excellent—and you, darling, did you pass a comfortable night?”

“Most comfortable. I begin to think, dearest mother, that no home is more tranquil and pretty than a cottage. This one is so picturesque and neat that it has quite made me a convert. I used to have a dread of those tempting-looking dwellings, overgrown with woodbine and roses, that peep into the windows the moment they are opened, and deposit in the rooms earwigs and other insects, to the great annoyance of the inhabitants. I expected to see a battalion of ants entering the doors, and cockchafers wandering through the apartments; but this charming cottage has corrected my preconceived opinion, and I am sure you and I, dearest mother, will be as happy in a cottage home as ever we were in more stately ones.”

Mrs. Sydney arose and pressed her daughter to her breast, for she knew how to value the self-control which she felt assured had prompted her assumption of cheerfulness, and her own aspect brightened as she contemplated that of her child.

“Look, mother, can anything be more beautiful than the view from this bay-window? The smooth and velvet-like lawn, the

varied beds of lovely flowers scattered through it, the noble trees and fine shrubs, and the rapid and pellucid river that bounds it, what can be more charming. I feel as if I should never wish to leave such a spot; and, if we can but find one like it, how happy we shall be !”

“We will ask Mr. Wandsworth to look out for a cottage for us, as like this as possible, dearest; my only fear is lest we should find a winter in it rather trying to our health;” and Mrs. Sydney sighed as she reflected on the delicacy of her daughter’s.

“Delicacy of health and warm climates are considerations only for the rich, dear mother, and, as we no longer appertain to that privileged class, we must become robust and independent of skiey influences. I mean to turn my talents—if, indeed, I possess any—to gardening, superintending the dairy and poultry-yard, and acquiring the art of making those delicious breakfast cakes which used sometimes to tempt your puny appetite at home.”

Mrs. Sydney smiled faintly at the assumed gaiety of Louisa, and felt that she was, if possible, dearer to her than ever for this display of it. But, the truth was, there was less of assumption in Louisa’s gaiety than her mother imagined; and, at the risk of shocking our readers by an acknowledgment of the weakness of our heroine, candour compels us to state that her dream of the previous night, in spite of all her reasoning against such a piece of folly, still exercised a very salutary influence on her spirits, and induced a cheerfulness to which she had long been a stranger. When she sought her chamber after breakfast, to put on her bonnet and shawl for a stroll on the lawn, she was met by Nurse Murray, who, with a lengthened face, expressed her hope that her dear young lady had found something fit to eat for her morning repast.

“Oh! yes, my good Murray, an excellent breakfast. Such nice butter and cream, and good bread!”

“But only one kind of bread, and no cakes or rolls! Oh! this is but a poor, a very poor sort of place for such ladies as your lady mother and you, Miss Sydney! No regular man-cook, or, in fact, any cook at all for the matter of that, but just a make-shift sort of woman, who takes care of the house, and a shabby concern it is by the way of a house. I never could abide cottages. They never have housekeepers’ rooms, or stewards’ rooms, or any of the other comforts to which upper servants are accustomed; and I wonder, for my part, what Mr. Wandsworth could be thinking of when he

asked such ladies as mine to come to such a poor little confined place, where there is not a room where your mother's maid and I could take our meals, except a sort of servants' hall, with a flagged floor, and not a bit of carpet to lay under our feet. And, as for dinner, I'm sure I can't guess how it is to be provided or cooked!"

"My good Murray, you must learn to be less fastidious for the future," said Miss Sydney, gravely. "That is, if you wish to continue to serve me. By a flaw, only lately discovered, in my grandfather's legal settlement of his estates, it is found that they do not appertain to me."

"Not appertain to you, darling, his own lawful grand-daughter! To who else could they belong? Why, it would be nothing less than robbery should they go to any one else. No, I'll never believe, notwithstanding all the evil things I have always heard said against law, that it can be so bad as to take away a fortune from a gentleman's own lawful grand-daughter, to give it to a distant relation, merely because that relation happens to be a man. No, that would be too bad;" and old Nurse Murray drew her breath with difficulty, and her expansive chest laboured with certain undulating motions, symptoms peculiar to her when more than usually excited.

"I have told you the fact, Murray, in order that you should comprehend the absolute necessity of henceforth submitting with resignation to the inevitable consequences of my altered circumstances."

"Oh, my dear and honoured young lady, can you doubt your poor old Murray's submitting to anything, to everything that you may require? I would live on dry bread, yes, that I would, to be with you;" and tears of genuine affection vouched the truth of the old nurse's assertion.

"Be cautious, then, my good Murray, not to evince any discontent at the difference of the accommodation here and at our old home. We owe this abode to the kindness of Mr. Wandsworth, who offered it to us when we knew not where to go."

"Ah, darling! if I had only known this, I never would have found fault with it; but how could I guess what has occurred? How could I ever imagine such a terrible change? I thought your coming here was only just a fancy, such as fine ladies often have to leave grand places of their own, where they have every comfort and elegance, to go to some little cottage, where nothing of what they

have been accustomed to can be found, and the novelty of which pleases them, while the poor servants find the change a most disagreeable one; for, indeed, Miss Sydney, gentlefolk can form no notion of what a hardship it is for servants, after being used to every comfort, to come to little places like this, with bedrooms like pigeon-holes, and no housekeeper's or steward's room, and no still-room maid or active lad to wait upon them." And Nurse Murray sighed deeply as she recalled to mind the spacious and admirable servants' offices at Sydney Park, and the tidy and attentive domestics whose peculiar province it was to attend to the occupants of the housekeeper's and steward's rooms.

"Yes, Murray, I can imagine the change to be anything but agreeable; but as, unfortunately, it is unavoidable, it must be borne with patience."

"What a pity it is, miss, that I hadn't an inkling of the state of affairs before I left home! Home I still call it, though, woe's me, it is no longer our home!" and Murray's tears flowed afresh.

"What would the knowledge have availed you, my good Murray, except to have rendered your parting from Sydney Park more painful?"

"Why, miss, I could have had my own easy chair, and sofa, and footstool packed up to be sent wherever we fix, and several other little things that I am attached to from having used them so many years; and the beautiful new Kidderminster carpet, that was only just laid down in the housekeeper's room the week after we came home from Italy—oh! isn't it a sin and a shame to leave it behind? And I should like to have had my bed, for there never was so comfortable a bed; I thought of it all last night, when I couldn't sleep on the hard one they gave me here."

Miss Sydney bore with patience the old woman's selfish but natural regrets, and endeavoured to explain to her that she had no right to remove anything from Sydney Park, now that it and all it contained appertained to Mr. Sydney.

"But surely, miss, after having so long considered these things my own, and their being always called mine, it is hard they should be left for strangers;" and again tears started to the eyes of the old woman.

"I, too, my poor Murry, have left many things at Sydney Park endeared to me by long habit; but we must forget past comforts, and submit to present and future privations."

"Ah! miss, I fear we must, and the more's the pity. Well,

well, who'd have thought it? But as economy must, I suppose, be the order of the day, it would be well if Mrs. Sydney would engage the upper kitchenmaid at Sydney Park as cook. She is really very clever, and I must say often did the whole dinner herself when the cook was ailing, or out of temper. She does many of the knick-knacks and *on trees* (*entrées*) quite as well as he can, and as for hot breakfast-rolls and cakes, I'll back her against any baker in any nobleman's establishment in England;" and Murray became quite excited as she recalled to mind these dainties so liberally supplied by the clever upper kitchenmaid to the housekeeper's room.

"I'll name it to my mother," replied Miss Sydney.

"And there's the second housemaid, miss, an active, stirring girl, never seen without a carpet-broom, pope's-head, or duster in her hand, and one of the very best bedmakers I ever met with, and I'm a judge, for I'm very particular indeed about how my bed is made. I couldn't close my eyes last night, the bed they gave me was so uneven and lumpy. Mary Allwork would be a capital housemaid if, as I suppose, Mrs. Sydney will only keep one, and I'm so used to her that I'd prefer her to all others. Then there is the still-room maid, so clever at ices, and other nice things, I don't think *we* could do without her. She knows everything wanting in a housekeeper's room, and one has no occasion to ask twice for it. She hasn't her equal for making tea and coffee. No, I don't think we could manage without Fanny Betterton."

Miss Sydney smiled as she noted the *naïveté* with which Nurse Murray already evinced that she contemplated her own personal comfort in the formation of the new establishment she proposed, much more than that of her employers, and having told Murray that she feared the limited scale of domestics which Mrs. Sydney intended to keep would not comprise a still-room maid, she put on her bonnet and shawl, leaving the poor old nurse groaning in spirit at the anticipation of future privations and hardships which she felt it would be difficult indeed for her to endure, and wondering how her young lady could bear up against such trials as the being deprived of a stately home, the nicest of hot rolls and cakes for the matinal meal, the most tempting luncheons, and the most capital dinners—creature comforts which, in Nurse Murray's estimation, formed the happiness of life.

As Louisa Sydney roved through the shrubbery that bounded the small but beautiful domain of Thames Grove, and on the verdant lawn that felt like velvet to the feet, inhaling the perfume of the

blooming flowers with which it was so abundantly stocked, and listened to the sweet notes of the various birds that hopped fearlessly from bough to bough, and ran amid the flowers, she acknowledged that only in the tranquil shades of the country can a mind, harassed by care, taste repose. The silence that reigned around, interrupted but by the delightful songs of the thrushes and black-birds with which the grounds abounded, or the soothing murmurs of the silvery Thames, as it flowed rapidly along the edge of the lawn, composed and cheered her spirits, and the pleasure she experienced in this lovely scene gave her the assurance that the charms of Nature could well console her for the loss of that wealth and splendour to which she had so long been accustomed to believe herself entitled.

“It requires but little to furnish me with a home like this,” thought Louisa, gazing around; “and though it cannot be compared with Sydney Park, it would, Heaven be thanked! be quite sufficient for my modest wishes. Here, with my dear mother, my books, and my pleasant occupations, time would glide smoothly and tranquilly, if not happily, along, and peace of mind would gradually become mine. Yes, in the country, and only in the country, can I hope to regain peace. The busy world, with its tumultuous joys and empty pleasures, has lost all its attractions for me, and, young as I am, I feel in this peaceful solitude as a poor mariner does who has long been exposed to storms, and buffeted by the waves, when he reaches some safe haven of rest. With the wealth I have lost, I have acquired an independence of mind that never could have appertained to the rich heiress. I now view the world through a different medium; and sure of escaping the snares and toils ever laid for those of my sex who possess wealth, I may henceforth live free from the dread and suspicion of being sought only for my wealth that have hitherto poisoned life.”

While Louisa Sydney was indulging these reflections, her mother was noting down her projects for the future, and any one who had chanced to peruse them, would have felt an increased sentiment of admiration and respect for her, as her total abnegation of self was developed in the plans she was laying down. Mr. Wandsworth entered the study where she was writing, having left his chambers in London long before his usual hour for quitting them, that he might pay his respects to his fair clients.

“I this morning, my dear madam, communicated to Mr. Sydney that, in compliance with your advice, Miss Sydney had at once

declined contesting his claim to the estates hitherto believed to be hers, and that you had both, immediately on hearing how the case stood, removed from Sydey Park, and left it and all its valuable contents free for him to take possession. He was much touched by this proceeding on the part of Miss Sydney and yourself, and expressed his desire that you would select any portion of the furniture or books endeared to you by long association, which he would have conveyed to your future dwelling. It is evident that he had anticipated a stubborn resistance to his claims from Miss Sydney, and a lawsuit, which might, in all probability, keep him many years out of the possession of his rights. Though certain of regaining them in the end, he had a great dread of the delay, anxiety, and expense attending a lawsuit, and the being saved from one has highly gratified him. He really evinced considerable good feeling towards yourself and Miss Sydney, yet, strange to say, with all this declared sympathy, he did not mention anything that would lead me to suppose that he intends declining your too generous proposition of devoting the savings of your own income to reimburse the money expended by your late husband in the payment of his father's debts."

"I expected nothing of the kind, and, though I hope I am not proud, I must say that I wish for no favour from Mr. Sydney."

"But *this* is being proud, dear madam, and pardon me if I take the liberty of suggesting that it would not be wise to reject any offer of friendship which Mr. Sydney might think it right to make. For Miss Sydney's sake, pray do not slight this suggestion."

"I shall always be ready to adopt your advice, Mr. Wandsworth, as I have the perfect conviction it would ever be given with the kindest views to my advantage and that of my daughter."

Mrs. Sydney now communicated to Mr. Wandsworth her desire to rent a cottage somewhere in his neighbourhood, and also the arrangements she wished to make about insuring her life for the benefit of her child, both of which plans he promised to carry into effect with as little delay as possible.

"An acquaintance of mine called on me this morning, madam," said Mr. Wandsworth, "to inquire your address. He said he was commissioned by Mr. Rhymer to make the inquiry, but I, not knowing whether you wished just at present to have your place of abode made known, declined giving it, but said I would forward any letter sent to me for you."

"You acted perfectly rightly," replied Mrs. Sydney, "for my

all my arrangements for the future are finally made, I do not wish to receive any visits."

"Would you make an exception in favour of Mr. Sydney? He seemed anxious to be permitted to pay his respects to you and Miss Sydney."

"I shall be guided by your advice."

"Then I counsel you to see him, and will convey to him your permission to present himself. And now, dear madam, let me entreat you not to hurry yourself about taking a house. This one is quite at your service, as long as you choose to honour me by occupying it. See all the villas to be let around here, and just now there are a vast number, and when you find one that perfectly suits your taste, I will secure it for you. I have added two additional female servants to the establishment here, in order that your comfort may be a little better attended to, and I trust that you will pardon any want of it experienced since your arrival here."

Mr. Wandsworth was highly gratified when Miss Sydney entered the room, her cheeks wearing a brighter bloom than he had seen on them since her return from Italy, and her spirits much more cheerful. He gave her the key of his bookcases, and offered to send down daily the morning papers, but this last offer was declined by Mrs. Sydney, who was so little curious as to what was passing in the political or fashionable world, that she seldom looked into one.

Next morning, Mr. Wandsworth forwarded to her two letters, addressed to his care. One was from Mr. Rhymer, who, with much delicacy and good feeling, expressed his sympathy at the unexpected change in the prospects of her daughter, and his anxious desire to evince, by every means in his power, the esteem he had always entertained for her and Miss Sydney. In his letter, Mr. Rhymer stated that he had met their mutual friend Strathern, whose devotion to them was, if possible, increased by the intelligence he had communicated to him of Miss Sydney's change of fortune. The other letter was in the well-known writing of Strathern, and Mrs. Sydney's heart beat quicker when she recognised it. Her daughter was not present when these letters were delivered, and the anxious mother was glad to be alone, while she perused Strathern's. Nothing could be more touching than this letter, which, while it expressed with self-respect his surprise and regret at the treatment he had experienced at their hands, and his utter ignorance of any act on his part that could justify it, entreated permission once more to lay his hand

and fortune at the feet of Miss Sydney, and pledged himself to satisfy them that he had not been guilty of any conduct that could deprive him of their good opinion.

“Strange, incomprehensible!” said Mrs. Sydney, as again she perused the letter. “How can he justify the subterfuge of which he was guilty when he stated that he was going to spend the evening with his invalid friend, Lord Delmington, and yet, that same evening, we beheld him walking in the Coliseum with a woman whose name, nay, whose existence, he carefully concealed from us? How explain her presence with him at Como? Alas! he cannot justify himself. Would that he could, for the generosity of renewing his proposal for my daughter’s hand, the moment that he discovered she was portionless, proves his disinterestedness and high-mindedness. And yet, notwithstanding what I know, there is an air of truth and conscious rectitude in his letter, that almost shakes my belief in his culpability.”

Mrs. Sydney reflected some time whether or not she should show Strathern’s letter to Louisa. “It may agitate and distress her,” thought she; “but, nevertheless, I think it is better she should see it.”

Various and contending were the feelings of Louisa Sydney as she perused Strathern’s letter. Indignation that he could assume an air of injured innocence, when *she* had beheld him still the companion of that fair, but guilty woman, with whom she had first seen him that never-to-be-forgotten night at the Coliseum, at one moment filled her breast, but the next brought the conviction that *she* was still beloved, and beloved for herself alone, as was uncontestedly proved by his present offer, after he had learned that she was no longer the rich heiress; and the conviction was most gratifying. Often was that letter perused, and long did Louisa Sydney reflect on its contents, in the hope of finding some justification for him whom to have been able to pronounce guiltless would have filled her with joy; but, alas, she could not doubt the evidence of her eyes, and this assumption of innocence on his part only proved that he was hardened in sin; and, angry that he should thus attempt to make her again his dupe, she requested her mother to write to him, and firmly decline his offer.

In vain did Mrs. Sydney propose to give Strathern an opportunity of justifying himself, by her writing to him the cause that had induced them to act as they had done. Her daughter would not consent to the adoption of this measure, urging, as her motive,

that Strathern must be already perfectly aware of the cause, and only evaded referring to it because he could offer no excuse that any woman with pride or delicacy could accept.

The answer was despatched, and, though worded as gently and kindly as Mrs. Sydney, under existing circumstances, could express herself, its receipt inflicted the deepest pain on Strathern. It was now plain that no effort on his part could restore him to the place he once held in Miss Sydney's affection, or to the esteem of her mother; and as this torturing conviction impressed itself on his mind, a feeling of despair, which required all his reason to combat with, arose in his troubled breast. He became moody and irritable—reckless of the present, and hopeless for the future.

Not so was Louisa; a notion that her rejection might awaken her lover to repentance, and lead to a conduct that she could approve, had entered her mind, and with it a thousand vague hopes of better days that cheered her spirits, and supported her under present trials.

CHAPTER XLV.

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The lowly vulgar and the great
 Resemble more than men believe,
 And how'er different their state,
 They only can themselves deceive;
 The same their selfish thoughts and views,
 Though each a different road pursues.

For education can't refine,
 Though 'tis a lord's, a vulgar mind;
 Nor thoughts ignoble, though they shine
 In polish'd phrase, more favour find
 Than when, with language rough and rude,
 The low-born vulgar will intrude.

“What a creature!” exclaimed Lady Wellerby, when the Marchioness of Mountserratt withdrew. “Was there ever such a vulgar creature? I really pity poor Mountserratt for having allied himself to such a dreadful person.”

“Well, I must say that I think your pity is strangely misplaced, Lady Wellerby,” observed Lord Fitzwarren. “Had his brother not died, Axy would have had the best of the bargain in marrying this rich woman, and so he well knew, so I really think *he* deserves no pity.”

“But you do not, I hope, mean to say that *she* does?” demanded Lady Wellerby.

“No, certainly; neither merit pity. The lady wanted a title, and was willing to barter her money for it. The gentleman required money, and gave his name for it. Both have got what they desired, and consequently have no claim to commiseration.”

“But a man with his rank and vast fortune might have married any one he liked,” said Lady Wellerby; “and now to find himself chained to such a low-bred, vulgar person, who will expose him wherever she appears, must be, indeed, a deplorable thing.”

“I know many fine ladies quite as ill-bred, and not half so good-tempered at cards,” remarked Lord Wellerby. “I never saw any woman lose her money so freely. It’s quite a pleasure to play with her.”

“You should say to play *against* her,” said Lady Wellerby, “for she plays so abominably ill that her adversary must always win.”

“I have not made so agreeable an acquaintance for a long time,” observed Lord Wellerby; and know not how I should ever be able to pass the interminable evenings here had we not got her to play cards; so I desire that you and the girls,” addressing the ladies, “treat her with respect and attention.”

The young ladies shrugged their shoulders, and looked disdainful.

Lady Olivia, taking courage on the strength of her approaching nuptials, ventured to say that, “for her part, she should carefully avoid forming any intimacy with such an odious person,” a remark that drew on her a stern frown, and a half-suppressed imprecation from her father, suppressed only by the consideration that it might offend or disgust his future son-in-law. Lady Sophia bit her lip, but did not dare utter a word that would have excited the anger of her lordly papa, and the consciousness of the necessity of conciliatory measures rendered her more than ever jealous of the good fortune of her sister, which enabled her to express her feelings on this point.

“What an evening we have passed!” said Lady Sophia, as she and her sister, having dismissed their yawning *femme de chambre*, arranged their tresses and donned their *bonnets de nuit*.

“Yes, it certainly was not very amusing, I must confess,” observed Lady Olivia.

"I wonder how you can allow Lord Fitzwarren to sit down to cards for a whole evening, instead of making the agreeable to you."

"The truth is, I have so many things to think of that I like to reflect. I form projects for the future—arrange, in my mind's eye, the sort of home, furniture, carriage, etc., I shall have when I get to London, the *fêtes* I shall give, the persons I shall engage, and those I shall leave out of my parties, and, with such pleasant occupation for my thoughts, I never find time hang heavily on my hands; but you, Sophy, who are so differently situated, must be greatly bored when passing an evening like the last."

"I hope," replied Lady Sophia, growing red with anger, "that whenever I am on the point of being married I shall not be obliged to think *only* of the advantages to be gained by my marriage, and not of the person through whom they are to be secured. Poor Lord Fitzwarren, I acknowledge, is not a man on whom any rational woman could bestow a thought, so you do well to think of all the good his fortune will secure you."

"Well, I am sure, Sophy, I heartily wish that I saw any chance of your getting a husband."

"If to obtain one I should be compelled to plot, scheme, and flatter as you have done, Olivia, I never shall be married; for nothing could induce me to submit to such humiliation and trouble, even to secure a clever and sensible man, as you have taken to catch a fool."

"You forget that *you* tried every scheme to win the very person whom you now affect to scorn, and that you would give your eyes to stand in my position."

"Me! What an absurd idea! I would not marry this stupid fool for ten times his fortune. But as *you* were so glad to catch him, you fancy I should have been equally so."

"Poor Sophia, the grapes are sour! But why should we be continually quarrelling? Is it my fault that Fitzwarren preferred me? Consider that in a short time it will be in my power to be of use to you, and do not provoke me too far."

"Provoke you, forsooth! You really talk as if you were about to be a great personage, instead of simply becoming the wife of a very dull man, looked on by all who know him as a weak, silly, good-natured fool, whom you have duped into wedding you."

"I beg you will not address any more of your rude speeches to

me," said Lady Olivia, drawing herself up proudly. "If, through motives of economy, our parents compel us to share one room, it is very hard that I should be tormented by your envy and jealousy."

"Me envious or jealous! Really, Olivia, you make yourself too ridiculous. I am sure I regret as much as you can the parsimonious habits of papa and mamma, which compel us to have but one sleeping room. However, you may display your ill temper as much as you like, I shall not say another word to you, for I consider such quarrels as beneath me;" and Lady Sophia entered her bed, drew the curtains close, and, by certain nasal sounds, soon gave evidence that she slept.

The Lady Olivia shortly after followed the example set by her sister, and in her dreams again was busy in arranging the splendour of her town house, equipage, and toilette, while Lady Sophia, now in sleep, groaned in spirit over her disappointed hopes in not having secured a husband, and envied the good fortune of her sister, who had caught one.

When the Marchioness of Mountserratt retired to her dressing-room, after the card-party at Lady Wellerby's, her temper, controlled by her prudence in the presence of strangers, soon broke forth.

"Go, Justin, and order some supper to be sent to me: I am half-starved, for those shabby people, after winning my money, never so much as offered me a glass of wine and a biscuit."

The supper was soon served, and the lady did ample justice to it, as also to some iced champagne, which she pronounced to be very refreshing.

"It is not possible dat madame has lost *all* de money she had in her purse, ven she went out," said Justine, elevating her eyebrows into an expression of extreme astonishment.

"Yes, and a great deal more, Justin."

"Ah! *madame la marquise* must take care, or her fortune vill soon be gone. Madame does not know vat ruin comes from de cards."

"I don't care a fig for cards, except a game at beggar-my-neighbour; but when they proposed to play, I thought it would look very shabby for me to hang back, as if I was afraid of losing my money, so I went on and lost every rubber. But I never showed that I was in the least vexed, though my losses amounted, at last, to a large sum, and, to tell the truth, I felt disposed, more than

once, to throw the cards at that ugly old woman Lady Wellerby's head, when I saw how anxious she was for me to go on—her little eyes twinkling in her head, just for all the world like the snake somebody was talking of one day, when the wicked thing fixes its eyes on some unhappy bird, until it drops into the horrid mouth of the snake. I was the poor bird, Justin, and Lady Wellerby the snake."

"Or, rader, *madame la marquise* vas de goose and Mi-ladi Vellerby de fox," replied the pert *femme de chambre*, smiling at her own attempt to be witty.

"It is very rude and impertinent of you, Justin, to compare me to a goose, and I desire you will not take such a liberty again;" and the face of the marchioness gave indication of a coming storm.

"*Pardonnez, madame la marquise*, I not mean no harm. I make de mistake vera often, because I not know de English tongue; but *pauvre* Justine would rader die dan vex *madame la marquise*."

"Well, then, I will overlook it this time, but you must pay attention, Justin, to what you say in future; for now that I am a marchioness, it would not be right for me to allow a servant of mine to show any disrespect to the harristocracy."

"Madame is right, I vill mind vot I say for de future;" and the cunning *femme de chambre* threw an expression of as much contrition into her countenance as she could assume. "Madame is so good, and so noble, dat I vera moche fear dese people she play cards vid dis night vill vin all her money before she know vat her danger is."

"No, Justin, don't be alarmed, I'll be on my guard. I'll just let them win a little more, to give them time to introduce me to all the fashionable people at Naples, and when I have made other acquaintances I'll leave off cards."

"*Mais, madame la marquise*, dat is vat I vant to say, before you have made de acquaintance you vish you vill have lost so much moneys, dat is better dan all de lords and ladies in de vorld. Ven von has vere moche moneys dey need not care von fig, as de English say, for all de fine people in Europe; and *madame la marquise* had moche better keep her moneys safe dan trow it away at cards."

"You speak like one of *your* class, Justin; but, recollect, *I* belong to the harristocracy, and must act as such, and live with lords and ladies, my own equals."

"And vat good vill dat do, madame? Have you not every ting in dis vorld to make you *content*—a large fortune, good health, good

appetite, you sleep well, you have fine dresses, fine jewels, fine carriages—you have a *grand* title, vich has cost you noting—are married vidout the *ennui* of a husband; vat more, den, can you desire?”

“I desire to live in grand company—to be with great lords and ladies.”

“Ah! *madame la marquise*, *vous avez tort*, dat is, you are wrong. It is only lords and ladies dat vant your moneys dat vill make your acquaintance. Dey vill *mocque* and laugh ven your back is turned.”

“Mock and laugh! and pray why should they? What is there to mock or laugh at in me?” and the parvenue’s eyes darted angry gleams at her *femme de chambre*, and her cheeks became crimsoned with rage.

Justine saw that in her desire to warn her obtuse mistress she had gone too far, but with a tact that seldom failed her, she quickly recovered from her momentary embarrassment, and said, “You may vell, *madame la marquise*, ask de question. Vat, indeed, could dey find to *mocque* or laugh at in you? But *madame* may not know dat lords and ladies who are *nés*, dat is born, lords and ladies, always laugh at dose lords and ladies who are not born so. Oh! I have seen such *méchanceté* in de grand persons dat it makes me sorry to see *madame la marquise* vant to live vid dem. Dey are as cold and polished as de marble in deir fine houses, and feel as little.”

Mollified by this artful speech, the marchioness forgot her anger, and admitted there might be some truth in Justine’s statement; but added that nevertheless *she*, as one of the harristocracy, must live with her own equals; for if she did not, what would be the good of being a marchioness. Seeing, however, that *Mademoiselle Justine* was not convinced of the necessity, her mistress, in order to conciliate and win her over to her opinion, said, “Justin, you may take that garter-blue silk dress of mine, with the black lace flounces.”

“*Merci, madame*,” was the brief recognition of this present; and, as Justine withdrew, the marchioness murmured to herself, “Well, I think Justine might have shown a little more gratitude for such a rich gift. Why, that gown, with its lace-flounces and trimming, could not have cost me less than thirty guineas, and I have only worn it twice, yet she took it as coolly as if it was only worth a few shillings. Oh, those French waiting-maids! what a

set they are ! Whoever would have thought, when I was nursery-maid at Colonel Fairfax's, that I should one day have a French maid, be a marchioness, sitting down to play at cards with earls and countesses, and be giving a gown that cost thirty guineas to my waiting-maid ? When I look back, it appears for all the world like a dream ; and as for the time when I was in Ireland, and was looked down on there for not being pretty enough to get a partner at a dance, I can hardly bring myself to think that I am the same woman. Well, sure enough, some people have the luck of it. How many of the gentry that I used to look up to with envy formerly, might now be envious of me, with my grand title and fine fortune ? And yet, somehow or other, I am not happy, after all.

“ When I was poor, I thought that if I could once get money I'd be the happiest creature in the world, yet all the wealth I have since got has never given me the same pleasure as did the first quarter's wages, small as it was, that I received from Mrs. Fairfax. When I became so rich, I fancied that if I had a title I should require nothing more to be happy. I got the title, and yet am no happier than before ; for now I want to live in company with great lords and ladies ; though from the specimen I had this night, when I lost my money, and was tired to death into the bargain, I begin to fear their company won't make me any happier than I was before. I'm curious to know what I'll want next.

“ Heighho ! I sometimes think what a lively, sprightly girl I used to be when I was as poor as a church mouse, singing and laughing half the day, while now I'm obliged to remember every now and then that I'm a great lady, with a grand title and a fine fortune, and my own mistress, too, to cheer my spirits, I feel so often out of sorts. I've got so used to fine clothes, diamonds, and good eating, which in the beginning gave me so much pleasure, that I hardly seem to care about them now. Heighho ! how vexatious it would be if, as Justin says, these grand lords and ladies always laugh at those who are not born grand, and only become acquainted with them for some object of their own ! How hot and feverish I feel ! It cannot be the *paty de perigo* (*paté de Périgord*) and champagne I had for my supper that keeps me awake, and makes me feel so uncomfortable ? Well, if one can't have a little supper without being kept tossing about in a fever in one's bed all night, what's the good of being rich enough to afford to have dainties ?

“Heighho ! how tired I am ! I’ve a great mind to ring my bell, and have Mrs. Bernard up to read me to sleep. But if I ring, Justin will answer my bell, and be in a bad temper, so I won’t. Yet it is vexing to think that while I can’t get a wink of sleep, my *dun de* company and maid, who receive my wages and eat my bread, are, I dare be sworn, at this moment sleeping soundly. What a pity it is one can’t buy sleep, and a good digestion that would enable one to eat everything one likes ! It is some comfort, though, not to have the marquis always present at my meals, with his cold, proud eye watching every morsel I put into my mouth, as if he grudged it to me, and whenever I made a little free with him, drawing himself up as if he were a prince and I nobody. Yes, my marrying him, getting his grand title, and getting rid of himself, was the best hit I ever made ; and yet, after all, I am not happy, though I try to cheat myself continually by thinking of all I have to make me so. But what is the good of having all that is supposed to give happiness if one hasn’t the thing itself ? ‘Ay, there’s the rub,’ as the man in the play said ;” and the marchioness heaved a deep sigh, and again turned on her sleepless couch.

The next day the *cuisine* of the Grand Bretagne gave early note of preparation for the dinner to be given to the Wellerbys and Lord Fitzvarren.

“Let no expense be spared, Justin,” said the marchioness to her *femme de chambre*, as she sipped her *café au lait* in bed, and devoured some hot buttered toast, as a substitute for the muffins, crumpets or sally-luns for which she longed. “Tell the currier” (as she still persisted in calling her *courrier*, in spite of Justine’s frequent correction, “to inform the master of the inn that I wish the dinner and dessert to be the most costly and elegant that he can furnish, and the wines to match.”

“*Mais, madame la marquise*, how many persons will there be ?”

“Six ; five, beside myself.”

“*Il me semble* dat a *leetle* dinner, *très-recherché*, would be more elegant for so small a party.”

“Not at all, Justin. I hate little dinners ; so mind you tell the currier to order a grand dinner.”

“*Mon Dieu ! mon Dieu ! quelle bête de femme*,” murmured Mademoiselle Justine to herself, as she descended to convey her mistress’s instructions to the *courrier*. “*Voyons*, vat can be made out of dis folly ! If she *vill* be a fool, vy should I not profit by it ? *Écoutez, mon ami*,” said she to the *courrier*, when he answered

her summons; "I have von proposition to make to you vich might be of great advantage to us bote."

"*Eh bien, mademoiselle;*" and the *courrier* listened with profound attention.

"Madame vishes to give a grand dinner, and no expense to be spared. Dem vere her words. Now, such an order make de golden harvest for de *aubergiste, et, par conséquent,* for de *courrier*, who vill have his per centage and his *douceur* for de dinner."

"*Eh bien, mademoiselle;* is not dat all fair? Every one must have his rights, and dis is mine."

"*Je ne dis pas le contraire, mon ami;* but vat I tink is, dat if you and I vere better friends, dat is, more sociable, ve could help one anoder, and make moche more moneys."

"*Je ne comprends pas trop, Mademoiselle Justine.*"

"Vat I mean is, dat if you vould *partage* de profits of de dinners vid me, I vould make *madame la marquise* give many more. If you vill not, I vill prevent her to give any."

The courier put on a look of grave consideration, and said, "Now, mademoiselle, if I was to ask you to share de profits you have from de *modistes* and *couturières*, vould you not think me very unreasonable, and vould you consent?"

"*Mais, mon ami, ça n'aurait pas le sens commun.*"

"*Pourtant, mademoiselle, c'est à peu près la même chose.*"

"*Pas du tout. I can prevent madame la marquise* to give de dinners, but *you cannot* prevent her from having *des robes, des bonnets, des chapeaux, et mille autres choses* dat I only can order."

"Dere is someting in dat," observed the courier, and he scratched his head.

"I have de grand influence over madame. I can make her do anything I like. If I say to her dat you am not von good man, or dat I hear you speak disrespectfully of her, she vill give you your *congé*, and all you can say or svear, she vill not believe von vord."

"*Mais, mademoiselle, ça serait trop méchant, trop vilain.*"

"It vill be your own fault. I not like to do harm. *Je suis une bonne pâte de femme, mais que voulez-vous?* Every von must tink of his own interest, and make de moneys vwhile de sun shine. I prefer to be your friend rader dan your enemy, but it all depends on yourself vich I am to be."

The courier reflected for some minutes, and then said, "How much of de profits vould satisfy mademoiselle? She vill not, I hope, be too unreasonable?"

“ I tink one half cannot be considered so.”

“ Von half is too moche; suppose ve say von quarter. Dat is good deal of moneys, for I vill have all de trouble, and must make all de arrangement vid de *maître d'auberge*.”

“ Vell, I vill not be too hard vid you. I vill be content vid de quarter; but mind, *monsieur le courrier*, do not fancy you have de milords or miladies *Anglaises* to deal vid, who are so stupid and so *bêtes* dat any von may impose on dem. No, no; I am vide awake, and must have my rights, so be exact.”

“ Can mademoiselle doubt me?”

“ I have lived long enough as *femme de chambre* to doubt everything and everybody, so take care dat I have no reason to complain of you. *C'est l'union qui fait la force*. If ve understand each oder all vill go vell, and if madame should ever find de fault about de bills, I vill tell her dat dey are vere cheap; but mind, *mon ami*, ve must always appear *not* to like each oder, and dat vill prevent her, or de oders, to have de suspicion.”

“ *Ah! mademoiselle, quelle bonne tête vous avez. Vraiment vous êtes une femme étonnante.*”

“ *Je ne suis pas trop bête, monsieur le courrier, c'est vrai. mais écoutez-moi.* I propose for you to arrange vid de *maître d'auberge*, to charge de double price for de dinner, *dessert, et des vins*, den to give you von half of de profit, of vich you are to give me de quarter.”

“ Dat would not do in many hotels, mademoiselle—not here, *par exemple—les aubergistes sont trop exacts.*”

“ Dey are, den, *plus bêtes* dan I tought dey vere. Vell, vat you must do is to make de false bills, vich you can show madame, pay de true vous, and ve can den settle our accounts togeder; but mind, *monsieur le courrier*, no sheating vid me; no, no, I not stand it.”

“ *Comptez sur mon honneur, Mademoiselle Justine; fiez-vous à moi.*”

“ I have von oder tought: suppose ve could have de *aubergiste* to furnish all de articles of a second or third-rate *qualité*, and charge for de best. Would not dat be an excellent plan?”

“ *Oui, mademoiselle*, if ve vere in a private house, and I had de buying of de tings; but in an hotel like dis, de *maître* would not enter into des arrangements *pareils*. Dey have deir habitudes, vich dey never change. Dey allow de *courriers* to live in deir hotels free of expense, give dem de best of everything, *même* pay deir

blanchisseuses, and sometimes give *de douceurs*, but dat is all."

"*Ma foi!* to hear you talk you might believe *de aubergistes* de most honourable men in de world; but I have my doubts, *monsieur le courrier*, and so I repeat, once more, do not attempt to impose on me."

Few persons ever enjoyed a good dinner more than Lord Wellerby, and his enjoyment was greatly increased by the circumstance of his not having to pay for it. His satisfaction may therefore be imagined when he took his seat at the well-covered board of the Marchioness of Mountserratt, which might literally be said to "groan with the weight of the feast." He looked around with eyes beaming with pleasure, and smacked his lips in anticipation of the treat that awaited him.

"I wish, my lords and ladies," said the hostess "on hospitable thoughts intent," "that I could have procured you a better dinner; but Naples, unfortunately, is *not* London, so neither turtle nor venison is to be had. You must, therefore, take the will for the deed, and make the best of the poor dinner set before you. I think I can recommend the sherry, and the champagne is not amiss. My banker here procured both for me, as I am very shy about drinking the wines generally to be found at inns. What a way they have of messing up the fish in this country, and in France, too! One never can tell what one is going to eat. Lord Fitzwarren, won't you ask Lady Wellerby to drink a glass of wine? You don't take half care enough of the ladies."

"I never drink plain wine," observed the lady.

"There you are very wrong, for in a hot climate like this one requires it;" and to illustrate her belief in the necessity of having recourse to stimulants, the marchioness made a signal to her servant, who acted in the double capacity of major domo and *courrier*, who immediately filled her glass (and it was one of no ordinary dimensions) with sherry, which, instead of sipping, as ladies generally do, she drank off with evident *gusto*. The voracity with which she devoured the various dainties set before her astonished all present save Lord Wellerby, who, too much occupied in a similar way, was rather pleased than otherwise to be kept in countenance by the hostess. The ladies looked at her with ill-disguised horror as she washed down her food with repeated bumpers of wine, the effect of which began to be visible in her increasing exhilaration of spirits and decrease of reserve.

"Now this is what I call sociable and pleasant," said the

marchioness, glancing around, her eyes becoming every moment more twinkling and her face more red. "Here we are, 'lords and ladies of high degree,' as the old song says, and yet just as happy, and enjoying the good things set before us, as if we were not at all grand folk. Some people fancy that great lords and ladies are too genteel to relish their dinners, but if they saw us just now they wouldn't think so any longer. Give Mrs. Bernard a glass of wine. I'm sure I don't grudge it to her; though—would you believe it, my lord?—they make me pay ten shillings a bottle for sherry here."

Mrs. Bernard allowed the servant to pour only a very small quantity of wine into her glass, and then diluted it with water, which operation having attracted the notice of the marchioness, she exclaimed, "why, what on earth are you about, to mix water with sherry that cost me ten shillings a bottle? If you won't drink plain wine, surely the *ordinaire*, as they call it, the wine of the country, would be quite good enough for you."

The poor *dame de compagnie's* usually pale face became crimson at this coarse remark, but the good-natured Lord Fitzwarren was the only person present who felt any pity for her.

"Does your ladyship know many persons of high rank here?" demanded the marchioness.

"Yes, several," replied Lady Wellerby, unsuspecting of the motive for asking the question.

"I'm glad to hear it; for I expect that, now we have got sociable together, your ladyship will introduce me to all your titled acquaintance, for I wish to become intimate with persons of my own station."

"There are no acquaintances of mine here with whom I am sufficiently intimate to present you without their permission."

"Is there any English marchioness here at present, I should like to know?" asked the hostess, drawing herself up, and looking anything but pleased.

"Not that I know of," was the answer.

"Then in that case I must be the person of the highest rank at Naples, and, therefore, you need have no difficulty in making an acquaintance with those beneath me in rank."

The coolness of this pretension surprised and offended Lady Wellerby, who said "that it was not the custom to introduce strangers to each other, without first knowing whether or not it would be agreeable to both parties."

Lord Wellerby, who noticed the rising anger of his hostess, and, from his desire of securing her for his nightly rubber, wished to avert it, here interposed by saying that as soon as a certain event had taken place—and he looked from Lord Fitzwarren to his daughter—he would give a party, for the express purpose of making Lady Mountserratt acquainted with the *beau monde* at Naples.

“Well, that’s very kind of you, I’m sure, my lord, and I’m greatly obliged to you; but it’s only fair, too, for I played whist all last evening to please you, not caring a fig for the game; but I like to give and take, and if my lady won’t introduce me into company, I won’t play at whist, I can tell you.”

This open and coarse avowal greatly disgusted the ladies, but it convinced Lord Wellerby that, had he not interposed, he would have been the sufferer, and he cast an angry and reproachful glance at his wife for having exposed him to this dilemma.

That evening the whist party was resumed, and Lord and Lady Wellerby arose from the table the winners of a considerable sum. The marchioness bore her loss at play with much less philosophy than on the previous night, and more than once bit her lips, cried out on the badness of her cards, and angrily slapped the table, demonstrations of dissatisfaction which alarmed Lord and Lady Wellerby, lest they should lose an adversary whom it was so easy to defeat. Lord Fitzwarren more than once counselled his partner to leave off playing, assuring her, with equal truth and candour, that her ill-luck was only to be exceeded by her ignorance of the game; but although much discomposed by losing, she persisted in playing, for the sole purpose, as she that night, when undressing, confided to Mademoiselle Justine, of showing those lords and ladies that she could afford to lose, and wouldn’t be cowed by ill-luck.

“And yet I confess,” said she to her *femme de chambre*, “that I felt such a hatred to Lord and Lady Wellerby when I saw them win rubber after rubber, and count the money over with such eager eyes and clutching fingers, that I longed to throw the cards at their heads, and call them a couple of cheats. Ah! Justin, people may say what they will, but being a marchioness doesn’t change one’s feelings a bit, I can tell you.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

The man with feelings gen'rous, noble, true,
 Who enters life ere by experience taught,
 Will find, unless he prudence keeps in view,
 His worldly wisdom will be dearly bought.
 False friends will seek him only for his pelf,
 And mock the weakness which they profit by;
 While he who serves them thinks not of himself,
 Nor sees the snares that in his pathway lie.
 Temptations court him upon ev'ry side :
 He scatters gold with open, lavish hand,
 'Till good men pity and the bad deride,
 And ruin comes. Then fly the sordid band
 To whom his wealth he ever did extend,
 For now they know he aid no more can lend.

The surveyor employed by Mr. Papworth to examine and give a valuation of the building and decorations of Strathern House, and an estimate of the sum that would be required for its completion, sent in his report, and the difference between it and the account of Mr. Drinkwater, although amounting to some six or seven thousand pounds, did not tend to console Strathern for the past extravagance, or the future expenditure indispensable for terminating the mansion. Mr. Drinkwater, offended at the implied doubt of his probity, proved, by having a surveyor called in to examine the building, now unceremoniously pressed for the payment of his account, to meet which, Strathern must sell out of the funds at a fearful loss, then having fallen very low just at that period. Those only with proud minds, and who, for the first time, have experienced a want of money, can imagine the mortification of Strathern at the pressing and somewhat peremptory style of Mr. Drinkwater's demands for payment.

"This person must be paid forthwith, at whatever loss to myself," said he to Mr. Papworth: "for I cannot allow him to continue writing such letters as these," handing two to his solicitor, who ran his eyes over them carelessly, without showing any symptoms of surprise or anger at what had so greatly annoyed his client.

"To sell out of the funds at this crisis would be little short of madness," said he, "and must not be thought of. We can baffle this fellow for several months, before the termination of which

time the funds will be up again, and then you can sell out without a loss, and pay him."

"And during the time for which you propose delaying the payments, I am to be subjected to a repetition of these insolent letters," said Strathern, pointing to the epistle of Drinkwater, lying on the table.

"A trifling annoyance, in my opinion, sir, when compared with the heavy loss to be sustained by selling out of the funds at present."

"Nevertheless, I am determined on taking this step, and immediately getting rid of Mr. Drinkwater."

"You will, of course, do as you please, sir; but if my advice is to be followed, and you will permit me to say that, in this case, it ought to be adopted, you would do no such thing. If you are determined on paying this man, who, had I been consulted, never could have had the power of acting as he has done, it would be better to raise, by loan, a sum sufficient to settle his demand."

Though averse to borrowing, Strathern consented, for the nonce, to be guided by Mr. Papworth, and that gentleman pledging himself that the loan could be effected in a very short time, his client left the office in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

On returning to his hotel, he found a letter from Lord Francis Musgrove, an old college friend, whom he had not seen for some years, requesting a loan of six thousand pounds for a few months, or, if that were inconvenient, asking him to join him in security for raising that sum.

Strathern remembered the writer of the note, a fine, manly, frank, and generous youth, ready to help his companions on every emergency, and endeared to them all by innumerable acts of kindness. He had seen little of him since they had left college, for Lord Francis Musgrove had soon after set out on his travels to the East, whence he had returned shortly after Strathern left England, yet he felt that he could not refuse the request made in such perfect confidence on their former friendship; and, though he acknowledged to himself that never could an application for a loan be more ill-timed, he nevertheless promptly determined on granting it. He was about to write a cheque for the sum required, when he recollected that it was first necessary to ascertain whether the money ordered to be lodged at his banker's had yet been received there. He determined to call on them and inquire, and he took up his hat to depart, when Lord Francis Musgrove was announced.

After the first greetings were over, Lord Francis said, "You have got my note, I suppose? The truth is, my dear Strathern, my want of the six thousand I named is so pressing, that I came to urge you to lend it to me. It is so long since we met, that I was afraid you would have forgotten me, and remembering the old adage, 'Out of sight out of mind,' I determined on personally renewing my request."

"Be assured I was not unmindful of it," replied Strathern; "the fact is, I was on the point of going to my bankers', to see whether or not my cash account with them would enable me to assist you, without overdrawing them."

"A thousand thanks, my good fellow. Just like you. But suppose, instead of drawing out your money from your bankers, you accept a bill at three months for me, which I shall lodge the cash for before it becomes due."

"Just as you like," replied Strathern, not sorry at that moment to be spared the necessity of drawing so large a sum from his bankers.

"I have brought a stamp with me," said Lord Francis Musgrove, taking out of his pocket a neat note-case, from which he subtracted the said stamp. "There is nothing," added he "like being prepared for an emergency." He drew the bill, Strathern accepted it, and Lord Francis replaced it in his note-case, saying, "A thousand thanks, my dear fellow. I must now be off, but I will call on you soon again. Where do you dine? Suppose we settle to have a late dinner whenever you choose?"

"Not to-day, for I have some business that will occupy me until late."

"Hang business?—treat it as I do, with sovereign contempt."

"That would be foolish," observed Strathern, gravely; and the thought crossed his mind that the bill he had just been asked to sign was the result of his friend's system. There was a carelessness and flippancy in Lord Francis Musgrove's manner that did not please his old schoolfellow, and which, on an occasion like the present, always a painful and embarrassing one to any man of feeling or delicacy, struck him as being peculiarly misplaced. Perhaps some symptom of what was passing in his mind was revealed in his countenance, for Lord Francis, having glanced at him, exclaimed, "Why, by Jove, my dear Strathern, you look as solemn as a judge about to pronounce sentence of death on some unhappy delinquent. I must be off instantly, for, were I to remain ten mi-

minutes longer with you, I should become infected with the blue devils. *Addio!* we shall meet soon again, but, *en attendant* my good fellow, if you don't wish to scare every man and woman that you meet, put off that saturnine expression and reassume your natural one;" and off went the thoughtless young man, leaving Strathern doubtful whether he had not acted foolishly in accepting the bill for six thousand pounds.

"Yet how could I avoid it?" thought he to himself. "We were such good friends at school and at college, that he naturally thought he had some right to call on me for assistance, and it would be really painful to me to refuse. I had, however, much more satisfaction in helping poor Olliphant. *He* my aid may place in a position to achieve a moderate independance for himself far from the scenes and companions of his former follies; while Musgrove — but hold, let me not do as I have been told all lenders of money to friends do, become the severest censors of their errors, thinking that their having assisted them gives a right to be severe. I remember the time when I was wont to admire the reckless generosity of Musgrove, yet, no sooner does he call on me to relieve him from its consequences, than I find myself disposed to judge him harshly."

And now Strathern's arrival in London having been announced in the columns of the *Morning Post*, that chronicle of fashion, and copied into the *Court Journal*, the pages of which serve as a reference for all the movements and whereabouts of the *élite* of the aristocracy, visiting cards, and invitation ones, came pouring in, not only daily but hourly; and, had Strathern accepted only one quarter of the engagements proposed to him, he would have scarcely left himself breathing time, so rapid and multiplied was their succession. While he sat meditating on the rage for pleasure which seems to actuate the gay world in London during *the season*, as the spring and two first summer months are emphatically styled, Mr. Sudley Seymour, the fastidious and acknowledged arbiter of fashion and elegance, came to pay him a visit.

"You see before you a man literally worn out by what are called the pleasures of society," said that gentleman, sinking into an easy chair. "Were I only to describe to you the routine of one day, you would wonder that I am alive. Yesterday, *par exemple*, I attended a *déjeuner dansant*, one of the most trying ordeals to female beauty, as it decidedly is to male propriety of costume, for a poor devil is obliged to rack his brains, and eschew the counsel of his

tailor, in order not to appear ridiculous at them. A man must not look as if he were going to his banker's in the City, or to the House of Commons, where, to show himself well dressed, would draw on him the vulgar and obsolete term of dandy, and yet he must avoid the regular evening dress. You can't imagine how ill the young women looked, flushed and heated from dancing, while the sun ogled them much more warmly than their attendant *beaux*; and matured matrons, for—Heaven be praised!—there is now no such thing as *old* women, plainly betrayed in broad daylight secrets only guessed at when they are seen by the more propitious illumination of wax candles, namely, their attempts to conceal the ravages of the ruthless destroyer—Time. Yes, *déjeuners dansants* are very trying to the fair sex, and many a conquest achieved on a previous night in a ball-room has been lost when the garish sun has exposed freckles and flushings, from which even the finest complexions are rarely exempt. Then the *toilette* for these anomalous *fêtes* requires such tact and good taste in the choice, that it is only a Parisian *élégante* of the first fashion that can be said to truly comprehend, and be able to command perfect success in it. I have attentively studied those matters, and have decided that robes of snowy hue, light as gossamer, and falling into graceful folds, not so long as to soil their hems by a contact with a dewy lawn, or so short as to reveal more than a very small foot, should be invariably selected on such occasions: and the fair wearers should take especial care to remember that these delicate robes are made to be danced *in*, and not sat *upon*, as an appearance of sedentary habits wholly destroys their effect. Diamonds and all brilliant gems should be carefully avoided, for, however fine their quality, they look meretricious and theatrical in daylight. The tender green of the emerald, dark cerulean tint of the sapphire, and lovely blue of the torquoise, entitle those stones to form the sole exception for figuring in the *toilette* of an *élégante* at a *déjeuner dansant*, but they are *not* to be encircled with brilliants. Flowers fresh—not from the garden, but from Constantin, at Paris, must adorn the light, transparent bonnets, or peep from the glossy braids or ringlets beneath them of young beauties; but let those beware of removing their bonnets, lest dishevelled locks or floating hairs, escaped from their combs, give them more the air of *bacchantes* than of dancing nymphs. I should also observe,” continued Mr. Sudley Seymour, “let not the chest, shoulders, or arms be bare, even though the time of congregating at these *fêtes* should be later than usual. One hour of daylight after

dancing is perfidious to beauty, for the flushing invariably attendant on such exercise transforms even the loveliest into something approaching to coarseness for the time being."

Strathern, amused by the gravity with which his old acquaintance canvassed these points, and the importance he attached to them, rather encouraged than checked his volubility.

"Yes, my dear Strathern," resumed Mr. Sudley Seymour, "you, fresh from the continent, can form no notion of the figures the women make of themselves at these *déjeuners dansants*."

"And I remember this man an intelligent person, who gave the promise of distinguishing himself in public life," thought Strathern, as he reflected, after his old acquaintance had departed, on the subject that furnished the whole topic of his conversation during the visit. "To find a man turning his thoughts to such frivolous and puerile matters, and disserting on female attire, as a *précieuse ridicule*, or man milliner might be supposed to do, is mortifying. If such are the results of a London life of pleasure, Heaven defend me from ever leading one."

The chagrin experienced by Strathern at the recent refusal of Mrs. Sydney and her fair daughter to renew the engagement with him, weighed so heavily on his mind that he felt an utter disinclination to enter into society. He accepted not a single invitation out of the numerous ones that were addressed to him, a line of conduct which, so far from producing the effect he desired and calculated on, namely, that of being in time forgotten by those givers of dinners, routs, balls, concerts, and *déjeuners dansants*, only served to render them more anxious to have his company. "*The rich*" Mr. Strathern, the exterior of whose splendid house attracted such general attention, must be indeed worth seeking by those who had daughters or sisters to dispose of in marriage. "*The rich*" Mr. Strathern, whom everybody heard of as buying the finest works of art and objects of *virtù* at Rome the preceding winter, must be an acquaintance worth knowing. Such a vast and magnificent house, to be stored with such treasures, could only be intended for one day being opened to the fashionable world by a series of *fêtes* that would inevitably surpass all that had ever yet been given in London, and to secure invitations for which each and all of the coquetries that compose the great world in our modern Babylon bestirred themselves by continuing to send him cards for theirs.

"This Mr. Strathern must be a most fastidious personage," said the Duchess of Ambleside to the Marchioness of Teviotdale, as these

two leaders of fashion sat in the *boudoir* of the former. "He has not appeared anywhere since his arrival."

"I wonder what he is like," was the response. "Some women who met him at Rome assert that he is singularly good-looking; but all the men declare that he is only passable."

"But we know what that means, my dear duchess. The men, whatever people may say to the contrary, are infinitely more envious and jealous of each other's personal advantages than women are. I never heard a man admit that any of his contemporaries were handsome; *au contraire*, they one and all, with a *naïveté* that is quite amusing, begin to decry the looks of any man we think handsome; while we, who have infinitely more tact than these lords of the creation, as they consider themselves, never openly attack the beauties *they* praise—nay, more, we affect to abound in their sense, and lavish exaggerated commendations, often wholly at variance with our real opinions, on the women they admire."

"Then you are disposed to think that this *beau solitaire* is handsome?"

"Decidedly; otherwise the men would not deny it with such *acharnement*."

"I heard something about his being engaged to marry some young heiress at Rome, with whom, it is said, he was desperately smitten, and that their engagement was broken off, no one could tell why."

"And some one told me that he, having discovered some slight levity in her conduct at a *bal masqué*, and having ventured a reproof more severe than the lady thought was merited, she broke with him."

"The Countess of Allancourt," said the groom of the chamber, throwing open the door, and that lady entered the *boudoir*, all smiles and amiability.

"We were talking of Mr. Strathern," said the duchess. "Do you happen to know him?"

"Oh! yes; I know every one," replied Lady Allancourt, who affected to have even a more extensive acquaintance than she really had, although hers was a numerous one. "He is immensely rich, very handsome, clever—but rather eccentric; and hates society—that is, good society. With another class, he is said not to be so unsociable."

"How dreadful!"

"Yes; it is quite horrid."

“Mr. Rhymer told me,” said the duchess, “that some young lady to whom Mr. Strathern was engaged discovered this fact, and broke with him in consequence. He mentioned the name, but I have forgotten it. One never remembers names in London. There is such a continual round of gaieties going on that one forgets everything.”

“I assure you, my dear duchess, that the rupture originated quite in a different cause,” observed Lady Allancourt, assuming an air of increased importance from the consciousness of knowing more respecting Strathern than the other ladies did.

“Pray tell us,” said the marchioness; “I long to hear all about this *beau solitaire*.”

“The fact is, that the young lady to whom Mr. Strathern was engaged passed herself off as an heiress of great wealth. Her name is Sydenham, or something like it, and her mother, a very artful, designing woman, tried to persuade Mr. Strathern to marry her at Rome, and postpone having the settlement drawn until they came to England. This proposition very naturally excited his suspicion, and he refused compliance with it. Nay, more, like a wise man, he wrote home for information, and discovered the imposition attempted to be practised on him. The result was, he at once broke off the engagement, and left the female fortune-hunters very angry at their disappointment.”

“Then it would appear that Mr. Strathern was no less influenced by mercenary motives,” observed the duchess, her ingenuous countenance betraying her altered opinion of him.

“*Que voulez-vous ?* Men are now so prudent.”

“Selfish should be the word. This *beau solitaire* has now lost all interest for me,” said the duchess.

“But you wouldn’t have him marry one who deceived him into the belief of her being rich, when she was otherwise?” demanded the worldly-minded Lady Allancourt.

“I would not have him seek a woman only because he believed her to be rich,” replied the duchess.

“I had fancied him quite a Byron sort of looking creature, with a high, pale forehead, melancholy eyes, a scornful mouth, opening to show very fine teeth, and that indescribable air that always distinguishes a man of genius from all others,” said the romantic Marchioness of Teviotdale, with a half-suppressed sigh.

“I never heard any one attribute genius to the gentleman in

question," observed Lady Allancourt. "He has never written anything, at least, never published."

"Persons may have genius without having ever published anything," said the marchioness, her thoughts recurring at that moment to certain stanzas in her album, indited by her own fair hand, and which she firmly believed to be instinct with the divine gift, the possession of which she had so gratuitously attributed to Strathern.

"He has been asked everywhere," proceeded the countess, "and will go to no one, lives on rice and iced water, his only luxuries being fruit and coffee. Reads the greater part of the night, and, in short, as I have been informed, leads the strangest life imaginable."

"Oh! what a delightful person he must be!" exclaimed the marchioness. "Who but a man of genius could so live? How I long to see him!"

"Genius has nothing to do in the affair, I assure you," said Lady Allancourt. "Mr. Strathern pursues this *régime* for the sole purpose of checking a predisposition to corpulency."

"Good heavens! he is not fat, I hope!" and the marchioness almost started from the *bergère* in which she was seated. "There is nothing so dreadful as a man who is fat."

"I am afraid, if the truth must be told, he *is* fat, and somewhat more red in the face than could be wished, replied Lady Allancourt who happened never to have seen the person she described, or even to have heard a description of him; but such is often the way in which persons are painted by those who affect to know, but have never seen them. The seclusion in which Strathern lived, and which the state of his feelings under the disappointment of his heart prompted, rendered him an object of more curiosity, and, consequently, of more interest, to the idlers of fashion than he would have been had he daily formed one in the numerous *fêtes* and amusements going on. Persons flocked in crowds to view the exterior of his mansion, admittance to the interior being denied them; and its magnitude, with the costliness of its architectural decorations, impressing them with a high notion of the vast wealth of its owner, his name, to which was almost always prefixed "the wealthy," or "the rich," soon became common as household words in men's mouths—ay, and in women's too.

Great was the annoyance produced by this general belief in the vast wealth of Strathern; for not only was he assailed from morning

till night by tradesmen soliciting him to view their choicest wares, and requesting to have the honour of entering his name in their books, but begging letters, setting forth, in the most plaintive terms that language could devise, all the miseries to which poverty is heir, came pouring in. To have read even half of these pathetic appeals to his charity would have taken up the whole time of Strathern, and to have relieved them would have exhausted a much greater fortune than his, even before he had made the recent large breaches in it. Nevertheless, he could not peruse some of them without deeply commiserating the writers, and he sent his servant to ascertain the truth of the statements they contained, and to administer assistance.

But another, and a still greater annoyance resulted from the exaggerated reports of his wealth, for it led every acquaintance he had among his contemporaries to imagine that so vast a fortune could only have been confided to him for the purpose of extricating them from the difficulties into which their reckless extravagance had plunged them, or to enable them still longer to pursue their improvident career. The gratitude of Olliphant, too strong for him to conceal the generosity of his benefactor, soon made known the service which Strathern had, unsolicited, conferred on him, and encouraged a host of needy young men to count on similar kindness. Hence, friendly calls from importunate visitors, who *would not* be denied access to Strathern, generally terminated in requests for loans or acceptances to bills, made with such apparent confidence in his friendship, and reliance on his power to grant the favour they solicited, that he found himself, owing to his too great kindness of heart and generosity, involved to a large amount, and soon after discovered that the sacrifices he had so unwisely made, in order to extricate these *soi-disant* friends, had been of only temporary use to them, while to him they held out the certain prospect of future heavy embarrassment. Shortly before he had become aware of this startling fact, Lord Francis Musgrove one morning entered his room.

"I am again come to ask your assistance, my dear fellow; but this I promise you, on my honour, shall be the last time. I am unexpectedly called on to pay four thousand pounds, for the settlement of which I thought I should have my own time. The man to whom I owed it has unfortunately died, and his plaguy executors are putting me to the utmost trouble and expense. In a very few weeks some arrangements I have now in hand for finally extricating

myself from all my difficulties will be terminated ; but, should my creditors get scent of this new affair, which they inevitably will if I do not at once satisfy these executors, all my arrangements will be knocked on the head, and I shall be a ruined man. Accept one more bill for me, my dear Strathern, for four thousand pounds. It will be the saving of me, indeed it will."

"This bill system is so repugnant to my notions and feelings!" said Strathern.

"I only proposed it, my dear fellow, to save you the necessity of drawing your money out of your bankers' hands, or selling out of the funds at present when they are so devilish low; but, if you can advance the four thousand, it would be better still."

Strathern knew that his account at his bankers' was not just then in a very flourishing state, for the six thousand given to Olliphant, and some large payments made for groups of sculpture from Rome, had made great inroads into the dividends paid into his bankers. He therefore, after a few minutes' reflection, said, "Well, for this once, I will accept the bill for four thousand, but, on the express understanding that you pledge your word of honour that this, as well as the former one, will be honoured, and that you will not again ask me to sign."

"Agreed. I give you my word of honour, both bills shall be paid, and, while pledging myself never to repeat the request you have so kindly complied with, I assure you, my dear fellow, that I can never forget your friendship on this and a former occasion. I will draw the bill," and he took a stamp from his pocket-book, and began writing, while Strathern, conscious of having committed a new folly, and blaming himself for his weakness, signed it, and saw Lord Francis Musgrove depart in the highest spirits imaginable, humming a favourite air whilst he descended the stairs.

"If he should not be able to take up these bills, I shall really be in a serious scrape," thought Strathern. "Ten thousand pounds," muttered he, and the sum never seemed to him half so important before, "is a very serious affair, and I cannot, with the other claims against me, afford to lose it just now, without being put to inconvenience."

The next day Strathern went to the office of Mr. Papworth, to inquire if the money to be borrowed to satisfy the demand of Mr. Drinkwater was ready.

"I have again been annoyed by him," said he, "and I therefore hope that the loan is ready."

"I am sorry to say that it is not," replied Mr. Papworth. "Loans are not so easily effected as gentlemen of fortune imagine. I thought I had found a person to lend me the sum required, but, after entertaining the proposition, and, as I believed, having assented to it, he has declared off, on the plea that he has discovered that bills with your signature have been offered for discount to all the Jews in London, and that for one of six thousand accepted by you, only two thousand five hundred could be obtained. This is most injurious to your credit, sir, and will militate most seriously against my effecting a loan for you on equitable terms. I doubted the statement, not thinking it possible that you could already have had any transactions with the Jews, but he assured me that what he asserted was a fact. Had I been consulted, this unpleasant exposure would have been avoided," and Mr. Papworth looked more conscious of his own wisdom than ever.

"I never borrowed a *guinea* in my life, nor had any transaction with a money-lender," replied Strathern, indignantly, his cheek growing red with anger.

"Then I must conclude that you accepted some bill to accommodate a friend. A most imprudent measure, permit me to say."

"About the prudence of it I will not argue, but, with my notions, I should find it difficult to resist the pleadings of an old friend for a few thousands to extricate him from embarrassments."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir, for with such notions, carried into effect, few fortunes, however large, could long withstand the shocks certain to come from them."

The tone of rebuke assumed by Mr. Papworth offended and irritated his client, and not the less so that he began to feel the wisdom of the counsel offered to him. He therefore left the chambers of his solicitor in a very ill-humour, angry with him, with Lord Francis Musgrove, but most of all with himself.

CHAPTER XLVII.

No man so stern but he can feel
The influence that goodness hath,
E'en hearts long canker'd it can heal,
And bring back Hope, to light the path
Which man's own errors had obscured,
When into misanthropy lured.

Two days after Mr. Wandsworth had obtained Mrs. Sydney's permission for Mr. Sydney to pay a visit, that gentleman made his appearance at the cottage. He was a man advanced in years, in very delicate health, and with an extremely unprepossessing countenance. Shy and taciturn, he presented himself to the ladies with great *gaucherie*, but the gentleness and suavity of their manner soon reassured him. He almost apologised for claiming his right to the estate so long believed to be Miss Sydney's, and expressed his deep sense of the honourable conduct of both the ladies in at once yielding up the property, without waiting for the decision of a court of law. "This young lady," said he, turning to Louisa, "is heir-at-law to the whole estates after my death, in case I die without male issue; and as, at my age, and unmarried, there is little probability of my leaving a son, I may, in fact, consider myself as only steward to my fair young kinswoman."

Strange and unaccountable as it might seem, Mr. Wandsworth had never communicated to the ladies that the estate, of which Miss Sydney was now dispossessed, would revert to her, in case of Mr. Sydney's dying without male issue. Yet such was the fact, and he was actuated to this concealment by two motives; the first was a desire of guarding Louisa, for whom he entertained a sincere regard, from becoming the prey of some designing fortune-hunter, should it be known that only an aged and infirm man stood between her and so large a fortune; and the second, a wish of curing her of the proneness to suspicion, which, little as he had known her since she had reached womanhood, he had discovered formed the only flaw in her nature.

"Yes, she desires and deserves to be loved for herself alone," thought Mr. Wandsworth, "and how can she ever be sure of at-

taining this certainty, unless it is believed that she has for ever lost the vast wealth to which she was heiress? The man who seeks her for his bride, knowing her to be portionless, will entitle himself to her lasting faith in his affection, and this confidence will be the surest basis for their mutual happiness. This certainty no heiress, whatever her charms, can have; and it is now in my power to secure this future blessing for her, by not revealing that she is next heir-at-law in the entail. Mr. Sydney is not likely to keep her long out of the estates. I learned by chance the other day from his physician, that he has organic disease of the heart. Where, then, can be the harm of letting both ladies imagine that the estates are gone for ever from Miss Sydney? The somewhat spoilt and pampered child of fortune will, by this stroke of adversity, learn to see the world in a new and truer light, and her character will come out purer from the trial."

Such were the reflections that passed through Mr. Wandsworth's mind, and induced him to adopt the concealment alluded to. He had several examples brought before him, in his professional capacity, of the dangers to which heiresses are exposed, and the misery which follows the interested marriages into which they are but too frequently duped. Hence he looked with pity and alarm on this devoted class, and would fain preserve Miss Sydney from the fate that often awaits them. But he forgot the anxiety to which he was condemning her fond mother—the days of care and sleepless nights *she* must endure while she believed her daughter would inherit only the scanty portion she could hereafter secure her by insuring her life. Now the truth was revealed, in spite of all Mr. Wandsworth's schemes to conceal it, and a load of anxiety that weighed heavily on the oppressed breast of Mrs. Sydney was removed from it; yet she uttered no exclamation of surprise or satisfaction at the discovery that had thus been made to her. She remained calm and grave as before; and on looking at her daughter, observed that not a ray of pleasure sparkled in her eye, nor a smile dimpled her cheek, at learning what would have afforded such joy to others in a similar position.

"Yes, I repeat," said Mr. Sydney, "that, with my bad health, I am not likely to keep this young lady long out of the estates she has so readily resigned to me."

Mrs. Sydney attempted to change the subject, by reverting to the state of the weather, that never-failing topic to which the English have recourse when they wish to fill up any hiatus in their

conversations, or to direct attention to something else. The late prevalence of south winds, with their salutary effect on delicate constitutions in temperate climates like our own, was commented on with a gratitude experienced only by invalids who have severely suffered from the too frequent visits of the east wind; but the old gentleman, bent on adhering to personalities, quickly recurred to the subject that most occupied him,

“Before I saw you, ladies,” observed he, “I thought it a great hardship that, accustomed to every luxury as you have been, you should now be compelled to live in so very different a style; but since I have seen you, so fitted as you both are to enjoy all the advantages of the sphere in life in which you were born, the hardship strikes me as being much greater: and, pardon me, and do not take amiss what I am going to add, I would fain hit upon some means of securing to Miss Sydney, during my life, a portion, at least, of the fortune she will inherit after me.”

Had Mr. Sydney been about to propose something greatly disadvantageous, instead of the reverse, to his kinswoman, he could not have been more embarrassed than while he uttered these words. The fact is, the mild dignity and distinguished bearing of both the ladies impressed him with so high a respect for them, that he almost trembled lest he should, in his ignorance of what was due to persons so refined, say something that might give offence, or wound their sensitive delicacy. He had come to see them, prepared for hearing some lamentations on their altered fortunes, or some indirect appeals to his generosity; nay, such was the inveterate proneness to suspicion of his nature, that the very act of their at once admitting the justice of his claim, and resigning the property without contesting it, much as it had gratified him, awakened a doubt in his mind that it was done in order to have a right to expect some indemnification from him, for saving the delay and expenses always incurred by a lawsuit. It was to have an opportunity of judging how far his suspicions were justly founded that he sought this interview, for he peculiarly piqued himself on his quickness of perception, and insight into characters and motives. Finding that no allusion was made to their altered position, on the privations of which he expected that they would be most eloquent, he opened the subject himself, to give them an occasion of speaking on it, but seeing the pride and delicacy which withheld them from reverting to it, his desire to serve them rose in proportion to his appreciation of their characters, and with it a timidity to which he had here-

tofore been a stranger, where pecuniary matters were concerned.

"You are very kind and considerate, sir," said Mrs. Sydney, "and I feel, as I am sure my daughter also does, greatly obliged by your desire to serve us, but we neither of us shall find our comforts impaired by the unexpected reverse in her fortune, for we have already learned to be content with our present lot."

"You must at least suffer me, madam, to refuse any portion of the money you proposed refunding from your purse. On this point I am decided, and nothing shall change my decision;" and the old man's pale face became flushed by the novel excitement occasioned by his disinterested resolution.

"Really, sir, you overpower us by your kindness," said Mrs. Sydney, embarrassed by his unexpected generosity, and unaccustomed to accept obligations.

"Ah! madam, if you could but know the pleasure it gives me to be useful to you and this young lady, you would not wonder that I press my suit so warmly. I feel since I have entered this room as I have not felt for many a long year. The hard substance in which my heart was encased seems to have melted away, and I once more believe in goodness and noble sentiments, and am the happier for believing in them. It is you, ladies, who have wrought this change. Do not repel the kindly affections of a heart, old and withered though it be by misanthropy. Let me act as your friend, your kinsman, while I live; and let me die with the blessed conviction that I have in some way contributed to your comfort."

Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, touched by the old man's fervour, simultaneously extended their hands to him. He pressed both within his, and his eyes became humid.

"Look," exclaimed he, "at the miracle you have accomplished," and he pointed to his tearful eyes. "Never did I suspect that a tear would again dim them. Ah! had I but known you, never should I have claimed the property so much more properly vested in your hands than mine. But, unhappily for me, I long ago lost all faith in goodness; and because I met with some unworthy persons, who first duped and then mocked me, I believed that all were bad, and turned misanthrope. You are too good even to form a notion of the wretchedness of such an unnatural state of mind. If you could, you would take pity on me, and prevent a relapse by letting me hope that in time I may prove worthy of the good-will I would make any sacrifice to obtain. Mine has been a most unhappy life, and, although I have only myself to blame for misplaced confidence, and all its

terrible results, my misery has not been the less severe, that I had the consciousness of meriting it by my want of caution in not ascertaining the characters of those I so blindly trusted. Since the detection of their iniquity, I have shut my heart against all sympathy and kindness towards my fellow-creatures. Seeing that wealth commanded respect, and gave power, I have hoarded mine, sternly refusing to succour distress, and denying myself all save the common necessities of life. When I discovered my claim to your estates," —and he turned to Miss Sydney— "yes, let me still call them yours, I rejoiced in this accession of wealth, which would minister to my sordid pleasure of accumulating useless heaps of gold. I felt no pity for you, thus unexpectedly deprived of fortune, home—I deemed you, like many of your sex, worldly-minded and extravagant, and rejoiced that I could, even for a few years, keep the fortune from some one of those calculating spendthrifts who seek heiresses to repair their ruined finances, and to whom I considered you would inevitably fall a prey. I have seen you, and my opinions, my feelings, are wholly changed. I now wish for nothing so much as to resign to you the estates which will be yours at my death. Suffer me to do so. Plead for me, dear madam, with your daughter, and, if you persuade her, you will secure me a happiness greater than wealth ever could bestow."

"Do not think me ungrateful, dear sir," said Louisa, "in declining your most generous offer. I do assure you that I deeply feel your kindness, and that no doubt of its stability influences my refusal. I, like you, sir, have often thought on the position of heiresses, and have dreaded the being sought by some mercenary suitor for my possessions, and not for myself. This thought has, I will confess to you, sometimes poisoned my happiness; and, though you may accuse me of being romantic, I acknowledge that I have wished I could have the certainty of being loved for myself alone. The belief in my loss of fortune will be the only means of ever acquiring this certainty, and this motive would be quite sufficient to make me decline taking advantage of your generous intentions in my favour."

"There may be wisdom in your plan, my dear young lady, but permit me to say that there is also something less praiseworthy in it. Yes, there is suspicion, and of this baleful passion you must beware. Be assured, and I speak from experience, suspicion is even more injurious than want of caution. By it we wound and drive from us noble hearts, and canker our own."

Louisa Sydney's colour mounted to her temples at this friendly reproof, and her mother internally thanked him who uttered it.

"It was by my suspicions I offended every good person with whom I came in contact," resumed Mr. Sydney, "and that honest indignation on their parts, which was but the result of their conscious innocence, I, in my wilful blindness, attributed to anger at finding their schemes detected. Ah! since the scales have fallen from my eyes, and you, ladies, have effected this prodigy, how many self-accusations rise up against my conduct towards those whom I misjudged and wronged by my suspicions, and to whom, alas! it is now too late to make atonement."

Mr. Sydney took leave of the ladies an altered man, and left them greatly interested in his favour. His frankness in acknowledging his faults almost effaced the recollection of them from their minds, and, though both had decided not to accept the restitution he was so desirous to make, they nevertheless felt as much gratitude towards him as if they had availed themselves of it.

How true is the observation made by one who well understood mankind, that there are some natures, which by a contact with certain persons, are made better or worse! Mr. Sydney exemplified this hypothesis. Not naturally an ill-disposed man, by the deceptions practised on him in his youth, and discovered too late to prevent their results from being felt as a serious inconvenience in after-years, he became soured and misanthropic. The suspicion and dislike manifested by him towards his fellow-men, in turn, excited their ill-will, and many were the instances in which he had to complain of injuries and annoyances that might never have been inflicted, had he not, by the exhibition of his bad opinion of them, awakened evil propensities in those whom he encountered, and which otherwise might have remained dormant.

The impulse which prompts men to justify a favourable impression entertained of them has been sometimes observed to lead them to fulfil the evil attributed to them. Hence, while philanthropists, by their faith in goodness—a faith based on self-knowledge—are calculated to render mankind better, misanthropists produce the contrary effect, and often cause the wrongs they anticipate.

Mr. Sydney's morose and egotistical character threw him out of the circle of good men; and, finding those with whom he mixed to be all that he had previously been prepared to believe them, he, in proportion to his low estimate of them, formed a high one of his own powers of discrimination, and rejoiced at the notion

that, however bad the world might be—and had he was determined to think it—it could not exceed his conviction of its turpitude. The first really good man with whom, for many years, he was brought in communication was Mr. Wandsworth; but even this gentleman's good qualities were thrown into the shade by the jaundiced medium through which they were viewed, and, predisposed to see only evil, Mr. Sydney set him down as a hypocrite, who was enacting a *rôle* of honesty and good-nature. The native dignity and freedom from worldliness in Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, so different to what he had anticipated, at once produced a powerful effect on the mind of the old man: and there was something so pleasurable in the new emotions engendered in his breast by a belief in worth and truth, that he felt impelled to cherish, with no ordinary good-will, those who awakened these soothing but long-slumbering guests. When he entered Mr. Wandsworth's office the next day, his countenance was so much brightened that he was hardly to be recognised.

"You never told me what angels my kinswomen are," said he; "if you had, how much trouble would have been spared them!"

Mr. Wandsworth looked at him with surprise, so little prepared was he for this burst of admiration. "I think, sir," replied he, "that I *did* mention what very amiable and excellent ladies Mrs. and Miss Sydney are, and, to confess the truth, the intimation appeared to interest you so little that I am not surprised it has escaped your recollection."

"Amiable, and excellent, forsooth! why these are words applied to every woman who is not known to be positively the reverse. It is no wonder that I paid little attention to them. Why, I have heard these terms coupled with the names of women whom I knew to possess no one quality to justify them. You should have told me that my kinswomen (he seemed extremely fond of designating Mrs. Sydney and her daughter as such) were unlike all other women—that they were, in fact, what I believe them to be, angels."

"And you, sir, would have taunted me for such hyperbolical praise, and would have suspected me of trying to work on your feelings in their favour. Nay, more, when I did remind you that they stood in some degree of relationship to you, you angrily denied it."

"Then I was a fool. and, what's worse, a brute for so doing. But I am no longer morally blind. They have torn from my mental vision the bandage of prejudice which has so long prevented me

from discerning goodness and truth; I can now plainly discern, ay, and value both, and this comfort I owe to my dear kinswomen. Oh! what a blessing it is to have found such! I am no longer alone in the world, my sole occupation to defeat and outwit those who I thought had similar designs on me. No, I throw prudence to the dogs, I will have no more of it. Henceforth I will put my faith in the existence of goodness, and cherish it wherever it is found. I have now something to live for—dear, estimable relations, who, perhaps, in time may learn to entertain for me some portion of that affection which I already feel for them. What I now came here for is to entreat you to use your influence with them to return to the home they so lately left, and to accept the restitution of the estates which, in my ignorance of their inestimable qualities, I claimed.”

“If I know the ladies well, and I think I do, no argument of mine will induce them to consent to this measure.”

“Promise me at least that you will endeavour to persuade them. I said all I could, but I have so long got out of the way of begging people to take money, that I fear I have not the art of persuasion. Why should this lovely girl be kept out of her fortune until I die, instead of letting me have the comfort of seeing her enjoy it?”

Mr. Wandsworth listened with equal surprise and satisfaction to the generous sentiments which had so unexpectedly sprang up in the breast of him whom he had hitherto viewed only in the light of a sordid miser and obdurate misanthropist.

“You look astonished,” said Mr. Sydney, “I see you do, and, to say the truth, I am myself surprised at the total change wrought in my feelings. But it is my kinswomen who have effected this revolution; all the merit is theirs, for had I never known them, I should never have believed in goodness. I wish to prove my gratitude to them, and one of my motives in coming here is to request you to draw up my will according to the instructions I will give you. Take down what I am about to say.”

“Had you not better employ your own legal adviser! We of the profession do not like interfering with the clients of other solicitors.”

“Stuff, nonsense! Do not refuse compliance with my request. Life is uncertain, and in my case peculiarly so, for my physician has told me that I have organic disease of the heart, and at any moment the main-spring of the machine may give way. Would you ever forgive yourself if, through your notions of professional etiquette, I should happen to die before a will to benefit those you

profess to like was executed? Come, make no more difficulties, take your pen, and note down my instructions."

Mr. Wandsworth did as he was told, and Mr. Sydney dictated the following instructions:—

"I, being of sound mind but in indifferent health, hereby revoke all wills I may have heretofore made, and declare this to be my last and only valid one. I bequeath to Mrs. Sydney, the widow of my late kinsman, Augustus Henry Sydney, Esq., of Sydney Park and Easingham Hall, the whole of my property, landed as well as in the funds and personal; the same to descend at her death to her only child, Louisa Sydney, and to her descendants, male or female, in regular succession."

"Now let this be engrossed with as little delay as possible, for I shall not feel easy in my mind until it is signed and sealed."

Mr. Wandsworth promised that it should be ready for signature on the following day, and Mr. Sydney left him. He had not long departed, when a stranger of distinguished appearance demanded to see him alone.

"Your character, sir, is known to me," said the stranger, when they were *tête à tête*, "and it is the confidence it has inspired that has induced me to seek this interview. You are, I believe, the legal adviser, nay, more, the friend of Mrs. and Miss Sydney."

Mr. Wandsworth bowed assent.

"I have heard that, through some flaw in the will of her grandfather, the estates to which Miss Sydney was considered to be entitled have gone to a distant relation, and that Mrs. Sydney, with that high sense of honour that characterises her, has determined on devoting a great portion of her fortune to the payment of the sums claimed by the present owner of the estates. Fearing that, under those circumstances, these estimable ladies may suffer any privations, I have ventured to wait upon you, to request you to receive for their use such an annual sum as will secure the comforts to which they have been accustomed."

There was something so frank and earnest in the countenance and manner of the stranger, that Mr. Wandsworth became greatly impressed in his favour.

"I am happy to tell you, sir," replied he, "that although the estates, as you have heard, have passed away to Mr. Sydney, the ladies are not placed in circumstances that require pecuniary assistance. May I inquire the name of the gentleman who has evinced such an interest in them?"

“Had the assistance offered been accepted, I would have, in strict confidence, made you acquainted with the donor, I being his agent on this occasion;” and a blush which mounted to the brow of the speaker might have denoted, even to a less observant witness than Mr. Wandsworth, his consciousness of practising a little dissingenuousness on this point; “but,” continued he, “as it is declined, there is no necessity for revealing the name; and if, as an utter stranger, I may be permitted to ask a favour, I would entreat of you not to name this interview, nor revert to the subject of it to either of the ladies in question.”

“You may count on my silence, sir,” replied Mr. Wandsworth; and the stranger, rising from his seat, wished him good morning, and departed.

“Who can he be?” thought Mr. Wandsworth, “I never saw a more prepossessing countenance. Nevertheless, I am sure that *he* was not the agent, but the principal in the generous gift he wished to bestow. His rising colour betrayed it, and also convinced me that he is not habituated to deception. He is a fine young man, and I should like to know more of him.”

The stranger, as my reader has doubtless already divined, was no other than Strathern. He had met Mr. Rhymer the previous day, and that gentleman had communicated to him the painful intelligence, learned at a party the preceding evening, that Mrs. and Miss Sydney were actually reduced to positive privations.

“If I could but see them,” said that gentleman, all his habitual cynicism of manner disappearing in the interest he experienced in the fate of the two amiable ladies referred to, “I think I could persuade them to allow an old friend like myself to assist them. Age has its privileges—and it had need, Heaven knows, with all the infirmities and annoyances it entails! Mine—and, for the nonce, I rejoice in it—ought to obviate all objections to my bestowing on these worthy ladies a portion of my useless gold. They refuse to receive me, probably believing, as so many of those who form the world of fashion do, that because I cannot always control the expression of my disapprobation of the follies and selfishness I behold, I cannot sympathise with unmerited misfortune, or desire to relieve it. Well, so be it. Let the hypocrite, who utters only soft words, and greets foes as well as friends with smiles, but who is incapable of a kind deed, receive the meed of applause from those who look no deeper than the surface, while I—but no matter. What care I for the opinion of the senseless herd? I must find

out, through the solicitor of these ladies, whether I can be of use."

Strathern immediately went to Mr. Wandsworth's office, but he was not there, and it was only the next day that he found him. Unmindful of his own circumstances, he had taken two thousand pounds, out of a sum of four lodged for him at his banker's only the previous day, to place in the hands of Mr. Wandsworth; and although assured by that gentleman that the ladies did not stand in need of assistance, he could not vanquish the uneasiness which the bare notion of their being in difficulties occasioned him. He found, on his return home, a letter from his banker, apprising him that bills drawn on him at Naples, by Lord Delmington, for an amount that exceeded the funds placed to his credit in their hands, had arrived by that post, and requiring his instructions whether or not they should be honoured, with a reminder of the necessity of immediately lodging the amount overdrawn. He immediately replaced the two thousand drawn out the previous day, and again wrote to his solicitor to urge the completion of the loan for which he was in treaty. Having despatched his letter, he strolled down towards St. James's Street, and had just reached in front of the bay window of White's Club, that "cynosure of curious eyes," and then filled with well-known faces of men about town, as the phrase goes, when a slight tap on the shoulder caused him to look round, and, instead of beholding some familiar companion, he saw an ill-looking man, shabbily dressed, who said, "You are my prisoner, sir."

"There must be so mistake," observed Strathern, overpowered by the consciousness of the many witnesses to this disagreeable and disgraceful adventure, and precisely the very last witnesses he could have borne on such an occasion.

"No, sir, there is no mistake. I harrest you at the suit of Mr. Drinkwater, and you must come with me."

Not a man of the many acquaintances and *soi-disant* friends whom he recognised in the bay window came forth to speak to him. He would have given anything to have been out of their sight, yet he involuntarily turned his eyes again towards the window, and saw his *ci-devant* friend, the Marquis of Mountserratt, laughing heartily, while Lord Francis Musgrove, with a rueful countenance, contemplated the painful position of Strathern, but moved not from his place. Crockford's windows, too, were filled with gazers to this humiliating scene, and the street was, as usual on a fine day in the fashionable season, and at that hour, five o'clock, crowded with

equipages, equestrians, and pedestrians. A much less proud man than Strathern, and in a much less public place, would have deeply felt the humiliation of the position in which he was at that moment placed, but that it should occur in a spot where the eyes of those whom he would have the most wished to avoid were fixed on him, terribly increased his mortification. "You will not, I suppose, object to my having a carriage," said he to the sheriff's officer, as bailiffs in our more civilized times are styled.

"I hobjects to nothing whatsomdever that is legal, and that a gentleman is willing to pay for," was the answer. "So, if you will jest step with me down to the stand, we'll find one."

There was no alternative; so Strathern walked to the stand, side by side with his ill-looking companion, whose dress and appearance, but too clearly indicating his calling, excited the attention of all who met them in St. James's Street. A carriage being called, Strathern entered it, and his attendant following him, *sans cérémonie*, coolly seated himself by his side.

"To Chancery Lane, I s'pose?" said the coachman, winking his eye in a very knowing manner at the bailiff, proving that he was well acquainted with his whereabouts.

"To my solicitor's, Mr. Papworth, in Lincoln's Inn Fields," replied Strathern.

At another moment he would have been painfully sensible of the proximity of his odious companion, whose garments exhaled the disgusting odour of the very worst tobacco, but the mingled feelings of anger and shame which filled his heart precluded for the moment the consciousness of lighter annoyances.

"You'll be pleased to remember, sir, as how I harrested you at ten minutes to five o'clock. It's my juty to take you direct to the lock-up house, in Chancery Lane; but as I'm halways ready to oblige gentlemen—that is, gentlemen that hacts as sich—I have made no hobjection to letting you go to your lawyer's, which I hope you will take hinto consideration."

Mr. Papworth was at home, and evinced much less surprise at seeing Strathern a prisoner than might naturally have been expected.

"I answer for this gentleman," said he, nodding to the bailiff, so you may stay outside."

"Certainly, sir; if as how you hanswer for my prisoner;" and the man retired.

Before Strathern could give vent to the angry remonstrance

rose to his lips at the humiliation to which he was exposed, and which he very properly attributed, in the first instance, to having followed Mr. Papworth's advice to borrow money to pay Mr. Drinkwater, instead of selling out of the funds, at however considerable a loss to himself, rather than incur the present heavy penalty, and in the second, at the dilatoriness of Mr. Papworth in not having long before concluded the loan, that gentleman coolly observed that, though sorry to see him in such a dilemma, he must say that Mr. Strathern had no one to blame but himself.

"Had you consulted me before you placed yourself in the power of Mr. Drinkwater, this never could have occurred; and had you, since your return, not allowed your name and credit to be irreparably injured by your acceptances being hawked about from money-lender to money-lender, by the unprincipled spendthrift for whose accommodation you lent it, I should not have found such difficulty in borrowing the money for you as I have experienced."

"Your recriminatory reflections are inopportune and misplaced," replied Strathern, drawing himself up proudly and sternly. "It is by following your advice, instead of selling out, as I proposed, that I find myself thus humiliated. I will now at once sell, at whatever loss; but as this cannot be accomplished at a moment's notice, I suppose you cannot hesitate to liberate me from the grasp of the bailiff outside."

Mr. Papworth saw that his client was not in a humour to be trifled with, and he remembered that he, though embarrassed for the moment, was still a rich man; so, without further comment, he gave security for him, and Strathern returned to his hotel.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

When generous feelings fled man's breast,
Too stern and rude to guard them there,
In woman's heart they vowed to rest—
Meet shrine for all that's good and fair—
And there in pristine force they dwell,
From flowery youth to wintry age,
To pity's voice responding well,
A war 'gainst selfishness they wage.

The next day, Mr. Sydney was punctual to his appointment with Mr. Waudsworth, and signed his will. "This act is a great weight

off my mind," said he, "for never did I experience such a dread of dying as since I became acquainted with my fair kinswomen, and thought of assuring all my possessions to them. I have really been in a state of great nervous excitement during the last twenty-four hours, lest I should be snatched off suddenly—as I am led to believe will be my fate one day—ere this testament was executed. Now I shall sleep calmly, and await the will of God, certain that those dear to me will be repaid for the annoyance I inflicted when I knew not their worth."

When Mr. Wandsworth, a few days after, paid his next visit to the ladies, he urged them to accept the offer of Mr. Sydney again to take possession of their ancient home, but both were decided not to do so, from a feeling that under existing circumstances such a step could not accord with their notions of right, nor could either of them believe that much reliance was to be placed in the sudden friendship which had so unexpectedly sprung up in the breast of Mr. Sydney, a sentiment so wholly at variance with his former character and conduct. "Be assured, madam, that you do not render him justice," replied Mr. Wandsworth, "for, whatever may have been his faults, he is now fully aware of them, and I do not entertain any dread of his relapsing."

When Mr. Wandsworth was on his road back towards London that day, he saw half a dozen persons around a carriage which had stopped near a public-house. His curiosity being excited, he rode near the vehicle, and, in answer to his inquiries, was told that a gentleman had been suddenly taken ill in it. He approached nearer, and was greatly shocked on recognising, in the dying man before him, Mr. Sydney. He galloped off in search of a surgeon, and, having found one at Richmond, he insisted on his mounting his horse while he took that of his groom, and hastened back to the carriage. But, though Mr. Wandsworth had only been a short time absent, Mr. Sydney had breathed his last before his return; and the surgeon declared his belief, that, from the first moment of the attack, all hope of recovery was over, as it was evident the poor gentleman had died of some disease of the heart. The body was taken into the public-house, there to remain until a coroner's inquest could be held on it, and Mr. Wandsworth, considerably agitated, gave orders that every respect should be paid to it. The servant of the deceased informed him that during the last few days he had observed his master to be unusually excited.

"Yesterday evening, sir, he seemed more comfortable," said

the man; "but this morning he complained of a spasm in his left side. I wanted to go for the doctor, but he wouldn't hear of it, as he said he'd be better after he had been to Richmond to see Mrs. and Miss Sydney, about whom he was continually speaking during the last week. We had got so far on our way, when I, who was sitting on the box with the coachman, felt the check-string pulled violently; and, when I turned round, I saw my poor master in a sort of fit. I jumped down, and raised him in the carriage, for he had fallen back on the seat, and in two minutes after you came up, sir. I thought he was near his end, poor gentleman, for, during the last fortnight or so, he wasn't a bit like his former self, but seemed so anxious and fluttered like, until three or four days ago, when he said now his mind was easier."

Mr. Wandsworth then allowed them to return to the ladies, and acquaint them with the sad event, which he revealed with caution and feeling.

"Poor man!" said Mrs. Sydney. "How sudden was his end! Yet let us rejoice in the reflection that he died an altered person, more at peace with himself and all mankind than he had been for many years."

"I now regret," observed Miss Sydney, "that we did not show him more kindness, dearest mother; but, the truth was, I feared he might suspect me of being influenced by mercenary motives, were I to be as demonstrative of my good-will towards him as I really felt disposed to be. Poverty renders one so timid lest the rich should misjudge one."

"You need no longer dread being misjudged on account of poverty, young lady," said Mr. Wandsworth. "May Heaven grant that you may escape the evil interpretations to which vast riches expose their possessor! You not only now regain the inheritance formerly believed to be yours, but become next heir to the large fortune of Mr. Sydney, which he has bequeathed to your mother, with reversion to you."

Few in similar circumstances would have heard with such perfect calmness the intelligence communicated by Mr. Wandsworth as did Mrs. and Miss Sydney. The announcement only increased their regret for the deceased, whose friendship this bequest so undeniably proved; and any one who had chanced to see them on this occasion might have been led to think they mourned an esteemed and familiar friend, instead of a person they had only once beheld. Mr. Wandsworth related to them the anxiety betrayed by the deceased to have

his will drawn and signed, and his prophetic dread lest he should be snatched from life ere its completion, and they became much affected as they listened to the detail.

"How strange are the ways of Providence!" observed Mrs. Sydney. "Who could have imagined, when we left our home as we then thought for ever, that our so promptly doing so would be the cause of bringing such an accumulation of fortune, or that we should so soon be enabled to return to it again, empowered to render the poor around us happy and contented?"

The coroner's inquest was held the day after the death of Mr. Sydney, and the physician who had for many years attended him came forward to give his evidence, which left no doubt of the cause of his death, and the autopsy which took place confirmed his report to the jury, who brought in a verdict, of "Died by the visitation of God." The funeral took place a few days after, and the executors formally announced to Mrs. Sydney the large fortune to which she had now become entitled. The newspapers were soon filled with statements of the vast wealth inherited by Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, and, large as the fortune bequeathed to her really was, it was magnified into more than triple its amount by rumour. The whereabouts of the ladies again became noted in the fashionable journals, and once more begging letters and petitions came pouring in to them.

"Confess, dear mother, that riches have their annoyance," said Louisa Sydney, as letter after letter was unfolded by Mrs. Sydney and herself.

"Yes, my child; but we must not overlook our duties. We must succour the unfortunate, even though their name be Legion; and, to do this wisely, we must employ persons in whom confidence can be placed, to ascertain the truth of the statements contained in these letters."

"I acknowledge that a moderate competence has now more attractions for me than vast riches," observed Louisa, "for there is a great charm in being permitted to live quietly and calmly,

‘The world forgetting, by the world forgot,’

an advantage never allowed to the rich."

Louisa's thoughts constantly reverted to Strathern. "Where was he? what was he doing?" were questions which were continually recurring to her. That she was not forgotten, his renewed proposal proved most satisfactorily, and made, too, when she had

fallen from prosperity to evil days. Oh! how would she have joyed to share her recovered fortune with him who so generously offered to make her the partner of his, when, stripped of her wealth, she could be sought for herself alone! Yes, this undoubted proof of disinterested affection had Strathern given her, and warmly did it plead in his favour now. Why, why, had he deceived her, and in the most tender point? Why, if he loved her, had he been seen with that fair but erring woman, whose image so often presented itself to her memory, and never without bringing with it the torturing pangs of jealousy?

Some days after the funeral it was found necessary that Mrs. Sydney should go to the house of the late Mr. Sydney, in order that the seals placed on the property in it should be removed in her presence. Her daughter and Mr. Wandsworth accompanied her, and the executors were to meet her in Devonshire Place. The house was a large one, and contained pictures of great value, gold and silver plate of fine workmanship, cabinets filled with gems, cameos, and intaglios, curiously inlaid caskets, in which were female ornaments of the most splendid kind, with countless snuff-boxes, and *bijouterie* of every description. Rare books and illuminated missals were piled up in bookcases; and some of the rooms were filled with porcelain de Sèvres, old Chelsea, Worcester, and Dresden china, splendid pieces of rock crystal set in precious stones, and rare tazzas in marble. Even the ladies, though accustomed to see fine things, were surprised to view the endless quantity hoarded up here.

“My poor friend,” said one of the executors, noticing their astonishment, “devoted the greater portion of his time to attending sales, and bought everything that he considered to be going for less than its value. It was a mania with him, and he has left no less than two other houses filled with property of this description.”

Mrs. Sydney felt positively embarrassed by the extent of her unexpected riches. Mr. Wandsworth undertook to place a confidential person in the house, and to have the various articles selected by the ladies sent off to Sydney Park. On leaving the house to enter their carriage, they met Mr. Rhymer, who happened to be passing the door. Great was his surprise and pleasure at encountering them, and again and again did he assure them of it, with a warmth very unusual to him. “But do you know that I have painful intelligence to communicate relative to a friend

you once valued," said he. "Poor Strathern! poor as it now appears in every sense of the word, for he is, I hear, irretrievably ruined."

Louisa Sydney turned pale as marble at this news, and felt very faint, though, remembering that the eye of the cynical Mr. Rhymer was fixed on her face, she made a desperate effort to conceal her emotions.

"Can it be possible?" asked Mrs. Sydney, who, at this news felt all her former friendship for Strathern revive in her breast. "Rumour is so prone to exaggerate, that I would fain hope that some temporary embarrassment only has been magnified into ruin. Prosperity is, we know, so magnified—let us hope that adversity is likewise, and in this instance, overstated."

"All I know," replied Mr. Rhymer, somewhat piqued at the truth of his intelligence being questioned, "is, that Strathern was arrested in St. James's Street, in presence of several acquaintances of mine, from whom I heard the fact and whose veracity I could not doubt. He was taken off by a bailiff, to prison, I suppose, and where probably he may now be found."

"But he who had so large a fortune, and who was not addicted to play, or horse-racing, or any other of the amusements by which men ruin themselves," said Mrs. Sydney, "does it not seem improbable that in so short a time he should have come into such difficulty?"

"If you knew London as well as I do, my good lady, you would not deem this so extraordinary an event. Poor Strathern!—disappointed, as I hear he was, by some over-fastidious young lady, who threw him off because he was not as prudish as she thought right, became dull and moping—would not go into good society, and, so I suppose, fell into bad—was taken in to accept bills for some of his spendthrift acquaintances—gave away money as if it were dust to some whom no one else would relieve—and so, without playing, or horse-racing, for I never heard he was given to either, he is ruined, and I am sorry for it. But so it is: the wheel of fortune is ever moving; the rich of one day become poor the next, and *vice versâ*. By the by, now I remember, how shocked and grieved poor Strathern was when I communicated to him the reverse of fortune of this young lady; he positively looked as sorry as if *he* had married her for her wealth, and found himself wedded to a pauper instead of an heiress. Yes, it was strange, was it not? that I should be the person to inform him of Miss Sydney's loss of fortune, and now to

tell you of *his*! But I must say he took my bad news much more to heart, ladies, than you do, which speaks favourably for female nerves."

When this sarcasm was uttered, never was one less merited, for both mother and daughter were thinking of how they should proceed in order to extricate Strathern from his embarrassment, to effect which, they felt no pecuniary sacrifice could be too great; but, knowing how it would wound the pride and delicacy of their poor friend to have this interference in his affairs made known and talked of, and aware that Mr. Rhymer, whatever his good-will to both parties might be, would mention it to some of the half hundred cronies with whom his evenings were usually spent, they carefully concealed their feelings under a mask of calmness, and had so drawn on themselves the sarcasm he had uttered.

"Now that you are the richest ladies in England," resumed Mr. Rhymer, "not even excepting that female Croesus, Miss Burdett Coutts, whose tens of thousands have drawn more suitors around her than the famed Penelope of old, you will, I hope, permit your old friends sometimes to present their respects to you. In your less prosperous days, I know you denied them the satisfaction of proving that their feelings towards you were unchanged; but I suppose you thought you could not admit *some* without seing *all* who called on you, and that you did not like to give many the great pleasure that they would inevitably have enjoyed in beholding the once rich heiress reduced to comparative poverty. Yes, confess this was your motive for seclusion. Ay, you knew the world! Farewell! a thousand pardons for having so long detained you standing in the street; but there was no resisting the opportunity of telling you of the misfortune of a friend;" and off walked Mr. Rhymer.

"Let us re-enter the house, dearest mother," said Louisa Sydney, "and consult on what we had best do; something, and without delay, must be done. Mr. Wandsworth can ascertain whether our poor friend is indeed in confinement;" and tears filled Louisa's eyes as she uttered these words, and pictured to herself him, still so fondly loved, the solitary inmate of a prison.

"Yes, dear child, let us enter the house; but do not speak on the subject to Mr. Wandsworth: leave all to me."

Mrs. Sydney summoned her worthy solicitor from the upper part of the house, where he was still busily engaged locking up the treasures taken out of their cases for the inspection of the ladies, and acquainted him with her anxious desire to discover the place

of confinement of Mr. Strathern, and her intention of extricating him from his difficulties.

"May I inquire the age and appearance of this gentleman?" asked he.

Mrs. Sydney described Strathern; but never had her daughter thought her powers of description so feeble as when listening to what she considered a very unfavourable statement of her lover's exterior. Tall, well-made, a fine face, and distinguished bearing, the words used by her mother, did not, in her opinion, render justice to Strathern, though they conveyed to Mr. Wandsworth so correct a notion of a very superior-looking man, that it instantly occurred to him that the person described could be no other than the strange gentleman who had so lately come to his office to lodge money for the use of the ladies now before him. "Strange!" muttered he—"yet it must be so."

"What is strange?" inquired Mrs. Sydney.

"I am not quite sure that my suspicions are well founded, nor am I at liberty to communicate what has led to them," replied Mr. Wandsworth; "but be assured that I will immediately proceed to carry your wishes into execution, and to-morrow I hope to be able to inform you of the result. I have some clue to the discovery, for I know that a Mr. Papworth, with whom I am acquainted, is the solicitor of a gentleman of the name of Strathern; and, as it is no common name, I dare say your friend is the gentleman."

The ladies drove back to the villa, their whole thoughts occupied by the sad account they had heard of Strathern. Those who know anything of the hearts of women are well aware that, unlike those of men, the misfortunes of persons once dear to them, however those misfortunes may have been occasioned by their own faults, invariably awaken commiseration and tenderness in their breasts, while in the sterner sex they but too frequently arouse only recrimination and ill-will.

Men are so much more selfish than women, and attach so much more importance to wealth, that they are prone to dislike those who have by their own folly forfeited it, or who may expect assistance at their hands. How often has the prodigal, whose only error consisted in too profuse an expenditure, and who, in the days of his prosperity, showered benefits on others, found, when adversity had overtaken him, that the men who basked with him in the sunshine of fortune, who shared the luxuries his hospitality lavished on them, and who used his purse or credit as their own, were the first to

desert him when he stood in need of the assistance he had so often and so readily accorded to them ! Knowledge of the world begets hardness of heart, and this knowledge men possess infinitely more than women. It is, perhaps, the most charitable interpretation that can be put on their conduct towards their embarrassed friends and companions, when we suppose that the extent of their worldly wisdom, by teaching them to consider the possession of money as the *summum bonum* of happiness, and the surest basis for respect, renders them so averse to risk any portion of it for the relief of others, that they close their hearts and purses even to those for whom they once professed to entertain the liveliest friendship. Women, less skilled in this worldly lore, are more accessible to pity, and more prone to generosity. Seldom does misfortune, however incurred, appeal to them in vain; and many a one of the gentler, or, as it is sometimes styled, the weaker sex, has made sacrifices, and endured privations, in order to assist the unfortunate, that lordly man, with all his boasted strength of mind, would not have the moral courage to encounter, or the fortitude to sustain, uncomplainingly.

Never did Louisa Sydney feel drawn towards her mother by such warm sentiments of affection, as when she witnessed her sympathy for the misfortunes of Strathern, and her generous decision to extricate him from their results : and never, since they had left Rome, did she experience so much tenderness towards him as now, when she believed him to be the inmate of a prison—Strathern, the refined, the elegant, the intellectual companion, who had so often lent a charm to their society by his varied powers of mind, and brilliant conversation, the solitary inhabitant of some gloomy chamber, bereft of all the elegances, if not the comforts, of life !

Such was the image that continually presented itself to the saddened thoughts of both mother and daughter, for Mrs. Sydney's feelings were nearly as fresh and unblighted by worldly wisdom as were her daughter's, and both loved each other the better for this sympathy between them. The bitter sarcasm uttered by Mr. Rhymer sunk as deep in the mind of Louisa as he wished it to do, for, though well disposed towards both mother and daughter, the cynic was angry at not producing as great an effect on them by the melancholy intelligence he communicated of Strathern as he calculated upon, and, mistaking their assumed calmness for indifference, he aimed this dart with unerring skill at her whose heart was, at the moment he pointed it, melting with pity and tenderness. "Had

poor Strathern"—and oh, what a vast sum of kindness is often comprised in that little monosyllable *poor*!—"been indeed driven, as Mr. Rhymmer asserted, by disappointment of the affections to fly from the society he was formed to adorn, into that which led to his ruin by rendering him the dupe of the impoverished *roués* of which it was composed?" was a question that often suggested itself to Louisa. "Might *she* not have been too severe in her judgment and condemnation of her unhappy lover, in casting him off without permitting him an opportunity of justification?" was the next interrogation that reviving tenderness suggested; and then followed excuses, furnished by love, that, if offered by any other pleader, would have been silenced as weak and unsatisfactory. "What, if the woman with whom she had seen him had been a former acquaintance of his lighter hours, some fair unfortunate, 'more sinned against than sinning,' whom chance had thrown in his path at Rome, and whom pity had induced him to bestow a few brief hours on! Men felt so differently on such points from women, that that which, considering her engagement with him, had so deeply wounded and offended *her*, might be viewed by Strathern as a crime of no deep dye, and was only concealed from her through motives of delicacy, which precluded his referring to aught impure in her presence. Men were not to be judged so severely as women. Their education, their habits, were so widely different. Yes, she might have been too stern, too unrelenting, and bitterly had *poor* Strathern expiated his error."

Such were the reflections of Louisa Sydney, who, totally forgetful that her mother had formerly offered in vain the same defence for Strathern that her own pity and revived tenderness now whispered, felt ready, had her lover presented himself before her, to pardon and restore him to favour. It was his misfortunes that achieved this victory over offended pride and female delicacy; and, as she remembered that *he* had sought her when no longer the rich heiress she had formerly been, and when his improvidence rendered a wealthy wife so necessary to repair his shattered fortunes, she longed to prove to him that *she* was no less generous, and that his adversity had only served to endear him to her the more.

"How fortunate it is, my dearest child, that I should have inherited this large fortune, and precisely at this time!" said Mrs. Sydney, after a long silence, during which she had been reflecting on the position of Strathern.

"And that I, too, dearest mother, should have regained my in-

heritance. Had we heard of his misfortunes when we had not the power of relieving them, how very painful would it have been! Yet, though thankful to Providence for this great good, I am most truly grateful that my altered position afforded poor Henry the opportunity of proving, beyond all power of doubting, that he loved me for myself alone, a happiness always denied to heiresses."

"I never for a moment entertained a doubt of the perfect disinterestedness of Mr. Strathern. He was too proud, too noble-minded, to wed for fortune," replied Mrs. Sydney; "and such is still my opinion of his delicacy on this point, that I believe he would suffer any hardship rather than condescend to accept succour from us. I have been devising many plans for extricating him without his being able to discover the source from which the aid comes: but, with so proud and sensitive a man, it is very difficult to arrange this."

"Could we not send him a hundred thousand pounds anonymously—ay, or two, if you thought that would be sufficient to save him?" said Louisa, with animation.

"Such gifts are so rare in these selfish days, that I fear, my child, that, coupling it with my recent acquisition of vast wealth, and my former friendship for him, he would instantly divine the donor, and refuse the donation."

"I wish good Mr. Wandsworth was come. He is so sensible and experienced, that he could probably suggest some mode of rescuing our poor friend. He has also so kind a heart that I am sure he will have pleasure in carrying our wishes into execution. I shall always esteem this excellent man, for having allowed us—and the world, too—to believe that my estates were gone from me for ever. It was to this stratagem of his that I am indebted for the happiness of knowing that poor Henry sought me for myself alone, and the largest fortune could never have given me this imperishable gratification."

Mr. Wandsworth came to Thames Grove the following day, and his countenance announced that he was the bearer of good tidings.

"I am glad to be able to assure you, ladies, that Mr. Strathern, *is not*, and *has not been*, the inmate of a prison, as you were led to believe. It is true that he was arrested, and in the most public part of London too—a very annoying circumstance for a gentleman like him, but, nevertheless, not without its counterbalancing advantages. An excessive generosity towards his acquaintance and friends, many of whom were unworthy of it, has been his besetting sin, and led him into the pernicious system of lending his name to

bills for a very large amount for their accommodation. The bad reputation of those friends in all pecuniary transactions led to their having recourse to usurers of the very worst class to negotiate them, so that the credit of Mr. Strathern became seriously injured by the contact with the drawers of these bills, and the money-lenders into whose hands unknown to him they passed. When a gentleman's bills are cashed at the rate of 40 per cent., his credit, as well as his fortune, sustains a serious injury.

"The architect employed to build for Mr. Strathern in his absence so far exceeded his instructions as to erect a palace instead of a mansion, as was intended by the owner, and so vast was the expenditure incurred, that Mr. Strathern was advised by his solicitor to contest the payments, and to have the works surveyed. This proceeding irritated the architect, and induced him to take summary proceedings against Mr. Strathern, who was desirous of paying him, and only waited to do so until Mr. Papworth had effected a loan for the purpose, he being unwilling that his client should sell out of the funds while they were so low. Loans takesome time to be arranged, and in the meanwhile the architect, alarmed at hearing that bills to a large amount with Mr. Strathern's signature were floating about in the worst hands, had him arrested. Mr. Papworth immediately liberated him, but the report of the arrest, coupled with the bill transactions, have given rise to the rumour that Mr. Strathern is wholly ruined, and, though free as air, persons are not wanting who still assert that he is in prison.

"His fashionable *soi-disant* friends have taken the alarm, and shun him as carefully as they before sought him. Mr. Papworth hopes that their selfishness and ingratitude will open Mr. Strathern's eyes to the folly of lavishing his money or credit on such a herd; hence he thinks that the publicity of the arrest, however painful at the moment, will extricate his client from all association with the designing and unprincipled set that had got hold of him. I affected to have heard that a large loan was required, and offered to advance it, so that I have now established a communication with Mr. Papworth on this point, and can therefore, madam, carry your wishes into effect. I am happy to add, that Mr. Strathern's embarrassments are merely of a temporary nature, and that he is still in possession of a noble fortune."

"You have managed this affair admirably, my dear sir," said Mrs. Sydney. "Pray advance the loan on the most advantageous terms possible for Mr. Strathern, but take especial care that my name does not transpire in the business."

CHAPTER XLIX.

The love of gold rules all mankind,
 And woman too, as cynics say;
 The high, the low, as you will find,
 This ruling passion all obey.
 The court, the camp, the county, town,
 Partake the thirst nought can assuage,
 Unless Jove's show'rs came pouring down,
 Or we revive the golden age.

The day which was to witness the solemnization of the ill-assorted nuptials of Lord Fitzwarren and the Lady Olivia Wellerby—that day so long desired by the lady, and anticipated with so little satisfaction by the gentleman, at length dawned. Many were the discussions and quarrels to which the various arrangements relative to the event had given rise; and although such altercations were as carefully concealed from the future bridegroom as was possible, nevertheless the bad tempers of the Wellerby family, and the little restraint the members of it were in the habit of exercising over their ill-humour, permitted sufficient indications of it to escape, as served to convince Lord Fitzwarren that the domestic circle of his bride elect was anything but a well-united or agreeable one.

“Hang me if I know which is most in fault,” would he say to himself, after having witnessed the sharp looks, and heard the angry replies which the ladies were in the habit of exchanging, while Lord Wellerby evinced the most perfect impartiality towards each and all of his “woman kind,” reproving each in turn with a surly, half-muttered “pshaw,” or invective, more resembling the growl of an ill-tempered old mastiff, than the words of a human being. The evening previous to the ceremony, Lady Olivia, putting on one of her most gracious smiles, asked Lord Fitzwarren to oblige her by not insisting on having that odious woman, Lady Mountserratt, present at the marriage.

“But I have promised her, and can’t be off, Livy.”

“What consequence can it be to break a promise to such a creature?—and when it will oblige me, surely you ought not to refuse my request!” and the Lady Olivia pouted, and assumed all the airs of an ill-used beauty.

"I never broke a promise in my life, however rashly made, Livy;" and Lord Fitzwarren sighed, as the thought presented itself to his mind that, had he been less scrupulous with regard to engagements, he would not then be on the point of marriage with a woman for whom he entertained no sentiment of affection.

"You take things so gravely," said the Lady Olivia. "Keeping a serious engagement, and breaking through a trifling one, are two different things."

"Be assured, Livy, that those who attach no value to trivial engagements, will be very apt to break through grave ones. I told the marchioness that she should be present at my marriage; it seemed to please her, and nothing shall induce me to break my word; so say no more on the subject."

"But only fancy what an appearance it will have among the persons of any rank or station here, that a woman, whose gross vulgarity has rendered her the laughing-stock of all Rome and Naples, should be one of the company at the wedding of persons of fashion like us! Think, too, how annoying to have her name in the list to be sent to England, for the newspapers, of those who attended my marriage!"

"I see no necessity of a list being sent, but, at all events, at the wedding she shall be."

Lady Olivia saw that Lord Fitzwarren was firm on this point, and his obstinacy, as she termed it, somewhat alarmed her for the future. "What if she should find him adhere, with equal pertinacity, to other decisions? But sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!" thought Lady Olivia, "and let me be but once married, we shall see if I can't have a will of my own, as well as he." She therefore made a merit of necessity, put on a smiling countenance, and harmony was restored.

"I have been thinking, Justin," said the Marchioness of Mountserratt to her *femme de chambre*, "that I ought to make a present to the bride to-morrow. It is customary, I know, and though I dislike her, and her mother and sister, exceedingly, I shouldn't like to give them the power of saying I didn't know how to behave on such occasions."

"If I was in your place, *madame la marquise*, I would not give nothing at all. It is only trowing away de money to dose dat would not tank you."

"It is not to be thanked that I give, but merely to show these grand folk, as they think themselves, that I can afford to be gene-

rous. I therefore wish to dazzle, to surprise them, Justin, and I wish you could tell me what gift would be the most likely to have this effect."

"Let me tink," muttered Mademoiselle Justine, putting her hand to her brow, and looking as gravely as if the most important subject occupied her mind. After remaining some time musing, Mademoiselle Justine exclaimed, "I have it, I have it. Suppose, *madame la marquise*, you give de bride dose vite garters, vid de diamond claps, de finest, as de *bijoutier* said, dat ever vas made."

"Ah! the ordering these same garters was a capital hit of mine, Justin. I shall never forget the man's face of astonishment when I commanded them. I thought to myself, every one that is rich now-a-days has diamond ornaments of every kind, but I never saw or heard of any lady, not even a Queen, having garters with diamond clasps, and so I determined to have them. The jeweller exhibited them to half London before he sent them home, accounts were given of them in the newspapers, and people naturally enough imagined what an immense fortune I must have to afford such extravagance. Then I used to make people stare, by purposely dropping one of them when walking on the pier at Brighton, always taking care to have a footman to pick it up. Yes, Justin, the diamond dog-collar and garters did more to establish a belief in my great riches, than all my other ornaments, costly as they are, ay, and even my expensive equipages into the bargain. I hardly like to part with the garters, but as I must give something to the bride, I had better give what I shall least miss, and what I am sure will rather vex than please her."

The dress selected to be worn by the marchioness at the wedding was of so splendid a character as wholly to eclipse that of the bride, whose temper was by no means improved at seeing all eyes attracted towards the person whose presence on the occasion she had used all her efforts to prevent, as also at observing the fixed determination on the part of that lady to render herself as conspicuous as possible. "Well, sir," said the marchioness, addressing the British minister, "here I am again. You have heard, I doubt not, of the shameful conduct of the marquis. He has proved himself a terrible scamp, for all he is a nobleman, and such treatment might have driven any other woman out of her senses. But I have a strong head of my own, ay, and a proud heart too, so I don't care a fig for him—not I; and he can't prevent me from being a marchioness, after all."

This speech was uttered in so loud a voice that it was heard by all present, and even the obtuse Lord and Lady Wellerby felt somewhat abashed by the vulgar exhibition of their new acquaintance. Lord Fitzwarren had never appeared so depressed in spirits as on this occasion, and, although he endeavoured to assume an air of cheerfulness, the effort was not crowned with success. Lord and Lady Wellerby were the only persons present whose gaiety was not assumed, for, delighted to have got a daughter off their hands, and without having to part with any money, they were in high spirits. Lady Sophia, filled with envy at her sister's good fortune in having secured a rich husband, took little pains to conceal her feelings; and Mr. Webworth, only just recovering from a bilious fever, the traces of which were still evident in his sallow countenance, looked as melancholy as a man could look who saw the most liberal of his friends entering a state which would preclude *him* from henceforth enjoying the agreeable privileges to be met with at the house of a rich and generous bachelor. "Poor Fitz!" thought Webworth, "this day ends his happiness, unless he should have the good fortune to lose his wife soon, either by death or separation. How lucky it was that he secured me something to make amends for the loss of the run of his table!"

The ceremony over, and the bride and bridegroom having received the congratulations of all present, Lady Mountserratt advanced, and said, "Come, my dear Lord Fitzwarren, don't look so sad. You are not the first man who has done that which he would rather have left undone, had he the choice. Remember, it will be all the same in a hundred years hence. That's what always consoles me when any thing vexes me."

This rude allusion to his feelings, and made in the presence of so many persons, greatly embarrassed Lord Fitzwarren, and deeply offended his bride, who, looking superciliously at the speaker, observed that "*She* must not suppose that every one was as unwilling to approach the hymeneal altar as the Marquis of Mountserratt had been."

"I'm sure *you* were not unwilling," replied the marchioness, "and so every body has said for the last fifteen years."

The bride bit her lip, Lady Sophia smiled with satisfaction, and the party left the English minister's to adjourn to a *déjeuner* at their hotel, which Lord Wellerby, on parsimonious thoughts intent, had arranged should be given at the expense of his son-in-law. Lady Mountserratt's was the only nuptial gift presented to the bride,

and when the *étui* which contained it was placed in Lady Fitzwarren's hand, she opened it with an eagerness that betrayed her belief that she should behold something very splendid. She did not at the first glance recognise for what use the present was intended, which the donor observing, she remarked—

“I thought you would at first be puzzled, for I venture to say you never before saw a pair of garters with diamond clasps. I am the first person who ever had any of similar costliness.”

Lady Fitzwarren, albeit unused to blush, felt her cheeks suffused, and, closing the *étui*, which she laid carelessly on a console, merely bowed her thanks, instead of, as the marchioness had anticipated, expressing surprise and admiration at the gift.

“What a fool I was,” thought she, “to have thrown away such a valuable present on such an ungrateful and ungracious woman! I wish I had it back again, and I would see her far enough before she should have it. And how shocked she looked, forsooth, as if there could be any harm in garters! But one never knows what to make of these fine ladies, they are so full of nonsense.”

The party now sat down to *déjeuner*, to which no one seemed disposed to render justice except Lord Wellerby and the Marchioness of Mountserratt. Even Mr. Webworth failed to evince his usual appetite, as he from time to time cast pitying glances at the bridegroom, whose fate appeared to excite the deepest commiseration in his breast.

“Bless me! how melancholy you all look!” exclaimed the marchioness. “Why, this resembles a funeral much more than a bridal repast. Suppose we drink a glass of champagne to the health of the happy couple; a glass of wine may revive their drooping spirits as well as ours.”

Lord Wellerby commended the proposal, the champagne was poured out, and Lady Mountserratt, taking on herself to do the honours of the *fête*, stood up and addressed the party. “As the person of the highest rank here, I believe it is my place to propose the toast. Here's to the health of the Earl and Countess of Fitzwarren, and may they have many happy returns of this day, and we retain health to witness them!”

“Why, that's an Irish bull,” lisped Mr. Webworth. “You don't mean to wish that they may be many times married?”

This observation set Lord Fitzwarren laughing, and the laugh was infectious.

“An Irish bull!” repeated the marchioness, growing red with

anger; "and where's the harm in an Irish bull, I should like to know. If I choose to enliven a party that seemed as gloomy as if they were all going to be hanged, I don't see why *you* should meddle with it; and you'd show your manners better by behaving with proper respect to a person of my rank and station."

Lord Fitzwarren, fearing that Mr. Webworth might still further irritate the lady, changed the subject by saying he believed the travelling carriage was at the door. The bride arose, and a general move took place. Had Lady Fitzwarren been going out merely for a morning drive, she could not have evinced a more perfect indifference when taking leave of her parents and sister.

"Good bye, good bye," said she, as she offered her cheek to be kissed by them: "we shall soon meet in England, I suppose;" and off she tripped, nodding to the marchioness and Mr. Webworth.

Lady Wellerby held her handkerchief to her eyes for a moment or two, but, when she withdrew it, no trace of its aid having been required was visible: and if a tear did dim the eye of Lady Sophia, it arose from envy at her sister's good fortune, instead of regret at their separation. A small parcel had, unseen by all present, been slipped into her hand by Lord Fitzwarren at parting. She carefully consigned it, with her handkerchief, into her reticule, determined not to inspect its contents until in the privacy of her own chamber.

"Well, they're off," said the marchioness; "and, as we all seem to be rather a cup too low, I propose our sitting down to table again, and finishing our breakfast."

"A very good and sensible move," observed Lord Wellerby, always having a view to economy, "and I don't see why we should not make a regular dinner of it. Lady Mountserratt, may I have the honour of a glass of wine with you?"

"With all my heart, my lord."

"I see there is some fresh champagne in ice, so let us try it;" and here Lord Wellerby made a signal to his own servant, who was in attendance, and whispered him to be sure to have all the unopened wine removed to his apartment. "I have counted the bottles," said he, "so have them secured at once."

"Are you a whist-player, Mr. Webworth?" asked Lady Wellerby, her thoughts already occupied by the desire of making up a rubber, to win some more of the marchioness's money.

“Yeth, I do play occathionally; buth I am noth a good player.”

“Then, if you have no other engagement, perhaps you would come and make up a rubber with us this evening?”

“I have no objection.”

“Would it be more agreeable to you, my dear marchioness, that our whist party should take place in your ladyship’s apartment, instead of in ours?” demanded Lord Wellerby, recollecting that if the party assembled in hers, the coffee, tea, lights, etc., would be paid for by the lady.

“In mine, if you please,” replied Lady Mountserratt; “for my room is much more comfortable than yours, and the refreshments are much better served. I never spare expense. I always tell my *currier* to order everything of the best; and I am sure it’s the only plan to be comfortable. Let me have the best of eating and drinking, say I; for one can’t carry one’s money into the next world; and therefore it’s best to enjoy it in this, while we can.”

This doctrine so exactly coincided with the sentiments of Mr. Webworth, that he glanced towards the speaker with a respectful deference, never conceived by him for any but the givers of good dinners.

“I quithe agwee with your ladyship,” observe he, “and think that if all the wold was of your opinion, life would be much mo agweeable.”

“More fools those that are not,” replied the lady. “Money can always furnish capital breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, teas, and suppers. These five meals break up a long day better than any other mode that I ever could discover, and no one can prevent the enjoyment of them to those who can pay. Now, every other pleasure is in some degree more or less dependant on others. Society, for example, one can’t enjoy, unless one meets with people—ay, and pleasant people, too—who are disposed to keep one company; but one’s meals—ah! they are solid pleasure no one can spoil.”

The expression of these sentiments achieved the conquest of Mr. Webworth; and the respectful deference of his manner towards the marchioness soon obliterated from her mind the anger occasioned by his former remark on Irish bulls. The conversation turned upon the culinary art; and in this he displayed so much skill and research, named so many excellent dishes and tempting breakfast-cakes, that the lady assured him that if, when he had no other engagement, he would come and partake her dinner, she would

gratefully hand over to him the task of ordering that repast, being now convinced that she would fare infinitely better by so doing.

Glad was the Lady Sophia when the breaking-up of the breakfast-party, prolonged to a late hour, enabled her to seek her chamber. Her first thought on entering it was—

“Oh, what a comfort to have this room to myself! to have no more an ill-natured, disagreeable sister continually reminding me of her good fortune and my own hateful dependance on selfish parents!”

How many kind and gentle hearts may be tempted to doubt that such unnatural feelings could exist in a sister's breast! How many, under similar circumstances, have wept long and bitterly when, re-entering the chamber once inhabited by a beloved sister—the companion of childhood, the dear friend of girlhood—they beheld the vacant chair she was wont to fill, the bed where she reposed, but in which she will slumber no more! How many fond and tender memories of the loved absent one rise up to cause fresh tears to flow—the confidential communion so long exchanged—the vows of unchanging affection, uttered through sobs the previous night, at the thought that it was the last they should share the same chamber—and the tearful words pronounced that morning! And now all was over! That loved companion was, alas! journeying away to a new home, with him who was henceforth to be the arbiter of her destiny, and never more could they, who had hitherto known no separation, be to each other what they had from infancy been. Such, we know, are the feelings that fill most sisters' hearts on the day when a bride leaves the paternal roof; but widely different were those of Lady Sophia. She locked her door, drew forth the little parcel, and, to her infinite joy, discovered that it contained three bank-notes of one thousand francs each, and the following letter:—

“Dear Sophy—As I take it the old governor and my lady are not the most generous parents in the world, it has occurred to me that, instead of a wedding present usually presented by a new brother-in-law, the sum likely to be expended on such a gift would be more acceptable to you, I enclose you a hundred and twenty pounds. It will always give me pleasure to have you with Livy and me as much as possible, and I doubt not I shall be able to get you a husband one of these days among my friends. So keep up your

spirits, and believe me, dear Sophy, your affectionate brother,
“FITZWARREN.”

Never before had Lady Sophia possessed even one quarter of the sum now her own, and great, consequently, was her satisfaction at the gift.

“He is not such a brute, after all,” exclaimed she, as she finished the perusal of the letter, and folded the notes up into their neat little case, and placed them in her dressing-box. “Ah! had I but had the luck to have secured him, how happy I should have been! and it was only her superior address in flattering him, and concealing her bad temper, that won her the prize. Heighho! it is tormenting to think that I might have caught him had I been wiser;” and here the Lady Sophia contemplated her own face in the glass, with no slight degree of self-complacency, “for, as far as personal appearance goes, nobody can deny that I am quite as good-looking, if not better, than Livy. Yes, Fitzwarren may prove a useful as well as a generous friend, if I cultivate his good-will; I will, therefore, write him a letter of thanks. Much as I dislike Livy, staying with them in London or at Melton would be infinitely preferable to being at home, so I must conciliate *her* in order to get asked.

“Well, it is some comfort to know that one has got a hundred and twenty pounds to call one’s own. How short a time should I be allowed to possess it if mamma knew it! but I will take care she shall not. It has been occurring to me that some good might be got by my paying some attention to the odious marchioness. She is as rich as Cræsus, and who knows but she might, if I made myself agreeable, bestow some of her wealth on me, or, at least, give me some good presents! Papa and mamma toady her, in order to get her to play at whist, that they may win her money, so I don’t see why *I* should not endeavour to derive some advantage from so vulgar and discreditable an acquaintance. I saw Mr. Webworth trying to ingratiate himself into her good graces to-day, but I can outwit him if I turn my mind to it.”

Such were the reflections of Lady Sophia Wellerby as she sat in her chamber, and her subsequent conduct will prove that she acted up to them, for no sooner had her lady-mother left the hotel with her husband, in order to take a drive to relieve a severe headache, the effect consequent on a too copious repast, and a couple of glasses of champagne, than Lady Sophia, having excused herself from

accompanying them, proceeded to the apartment of the marchioness, whom she found reposing in a *bergère*, fatigued by the excitement occasioned by the wine and her late luxurious repast. She stared with astonishment when she beheld her visiter, for hitherto the manner of Lady Sophia had been so cold and supercilious as not to have prepared her for this advance towards intimacy. "Bless me! my lady, is that you?" said Lady Mountserratt, rising from her recumbent posture.

"Pray don't move," replied Lady Sophia. "The truth is, I felt so lonely and so sad," and she applied her handkerchief to her eyes, "that I came to sit a little with you, knowing what a kind heart you have, and that from no one else here could I expect sympathy."

"Indeed, then, you shall find it, for I can well fancy how lonesome you must feel at being left all by yourself, as a body may say, for fathers and mothers are not companions like a sister—not, to tell you the truth, that *yours* ever appeared to me to be a very kind or loving one."

"Alas! my sweet friend, for so you must permit me to call you, you have but too well divined the fact. Lady Fitzwarren was *not* a kind sister, but such is the natural tenderness of my disposition that, unrequited though it was, I lavished all its affection on the playfellow of my childhood, the companion of my more mature years."

"More fool you, my dear lady! Always make it a rule to love only those that love you, and you can't go wrong. That's my plan, and I never stray from it."

"Lady Fitzwarren quite governed me, for my infatuated fondness for her was so great that I invariably yielded to her wishes. From the first moment I had the pleasure of knowing you, dear Lady Mountserratt, I longed that we should become intimate friends, for I felt that we were suited to each other; but my sister, jealous of your attractions, would not permit me to seek you, as I now, freed from her influence, do;" and the Lady Sophia took the red, coarse hand of the marchioness, and pressed it affectionately.

"See, now, what mistakes a person may make. Would you believe it?—I thought that you and your sister disliked each other very much, and that you both bore no good-will to me. But, said I to myself, what do I care whether they like me or not? so I went on never minding. But now you tell me that you really wish we should be good friends, I'm sure I have no objection. And so

your sister was jealous of me? How droll ! for, as I am a married woman, I couldn't be in her way," observed the marchioness, evidently pleased by the flattery of Lady Sophia.

"Not intentionally, I am aware, my sweet friend; but she feared that Lord Fitzwarren might compare your superior charms with her very inferior ones, and so perhaps slight her."

"Poor thing! I am sorry I made her uneasy."

"And will you let me love you a great deal, and promise to love me a little in return?" asked Lady Sophia, putting on one of her most winning smiles.

"Indeed, I will, so here's my hand on the bargain," replied the marchioness, already fascinated by the flattery and the flatterer.

"And, now that we are sworn friends, I must be perfectly confidential with you, my dear marchioness. My visits to you, when paid alone, must be stolen and secret ones; mamma never allows me to visit any one except with her, and would be very angry were she to discover that I broke through the rule. Therefore, when we meet in her presence, we must affect not to have previously seen each other that day. You will observe this, my sweet friend, will you not?"

"That I will; and it will be good fun to take in the old lady, won't it?"

"Capital! You are so clever, and so amusing, that even already I feel in better spirits."

"Yes, I'm no fool, be assured. How should I ever have got all Mr. Maclaurin's great fortune, or have become a marchioness, if I was?"

"You might have become anything you wished, my sweet friend. With charms like yours, and such cleverness, who could resist you?"

"And yet you see that scamp, the marquis, after all, only married me for my money. Heighho! the thought of that man always vexes me."

"He is unworthy of your wasting a thought on him. What a beautiful brooch that is you wear! I never saw anything half so pretty;" and the Lady Sophia looked at the ornament which fastened the robe of the marchioness with covetous eyes.

"I am glad you like it," replied the latter, instantly unfastening it, "for it is yours;" and she attached it to the *collerette* of Lady Sophia.

“ Really, I must henceforth avoid admiring anything you wear,” observed Lady Sophia, affecting to be embarrassed, though secretly delighted with the gift; “ but you possess such a perfect taste, my sweet friend, that one cannot help expressing the admiration your beautiful ornaments and dress inspire.”

“ Now, I remember it,” said the marchioness, “ it is said that presents with a point are unlucky, unless some coin or other is given in exchange. Give me, therefore, a paul, to prevent bad luck.”

“ I have not one about me,” replied Lady Sophia; “ but I will give it you when next we meet.”

“ Now, mind you don’t forget it; for I have known such things to happen about presents with a point or a sharp edge! Why, there was a pretty girl in our village in Ireland, and she bought a penknife at the fair to give to her sweetheart, to whom she was going to be married, and in two days afterwards he broke his engagement with her—the penknife had cut love! To be sure, people did say that he found out that she had been receiving presents from another young man, whom he had warned her against keeping company with, and that that was the cause. But it’s my opinion that the penknife was the real cause.”

Lady Sophia was disposed to smile at the *naïveté* with which the *parvenue* revealed the class of society with which her youthful days had been passed; but she checked the inclination, and tacitly assented to the superstitious feelings of her new friend, whom she left not until the carriage of her mother driving up to the door warned her to retreat.

“ Adieu! my sweet friend,” said she, embracing the marchioness with affected warmth, “ we shall meet again in the evening. How I wish you were at liberty to converse with me instead of playing at cards!”

“ So do I too, my dear; for I dislike playing, and hate losing my money. Not that I value money, but that I don’t like the bad luck of the thing.”

CHAPTER L.

Oh! would the young and rich, whose path of life
 Is strewn with flow'rs that hide the thorns beneath,
 Reflect that pleasure too indulged is rife
 With evil, and soon fades the scented wreath
 That lends to luxury a transient grace,
 Like that which revellers were wont to twine
 In ancient days around each rosy face,
 And brimming bowl fill'd high with rosy wine;
 But not less deleterious were the bowls,
 Though round them flow'rs exhal'd their perfum'd souls!

“And so Strathern is quite done up—completely ruined, I hear,” said the Marquis of Mountserratt to Lord Francis Musgrove and a few more of the set, as they sat in the bay, or as it might more aptly be called the *beau* window at ——’s club.

“Quite, as I understand,” answered Lord Francis, with a rueful elongation of visage.

“But how the deuce did he so soon get rid of his money? I always heard that he had a very large fortune, and he was not, I believe, addicted to play,” demanded one of the party.

“You knew him abroad, Mountserratt, did you not?” asked another of the clique. “How did he get on there?”

“I saw as little of him as I could help, for I never liked him. He was always a formal prig,” was the answer of the marquis.

“But did he commit any follies in Italy to account for this unexpected ruin?” asked another.

“Yes, he squandered lots of money on statues.”

“I heard from many of his college friends that he was a very generous fellow, and possessed a thousand good qualities,” observed a good-looking young man, with fair and curly hair.

“As every fellow who has thousands of pounds at his disposal is said to have,” said Lord Mountserratt, looking superciliously. “The good qualities of the rich,” continued he, “are never overlooked in London, I assure you, Campbell, and as you are a *very young man*,” and the speaker laid a strong emphasis on the three words, “you would do well to remember this fact, as it may render you less credulous with regard to the asserted merits of those you hear lauded.”

The colour rose to the face of Mr. Campbell, for he felt the implied sarcasm, but he was not a man to let it pass unnoticed ; so, turning to the marquis, he replied, " I cannot quite assent to the justice of your assertion that the rich *always* find people ready to give them credit for good qualities, for I know *some* men," and he looked steadily at Mountserratt, " whose wealth no one doubts, yet of whom no one speaks well."

The marquis bit his lip, but affected not to notice the retort, while some of the group smiled, and exchanged glances with each other.

" You, I believe, Campbell, belong to the self-constituted regenerating patriots of the day," resumed Lord Mountserratt, " one of the articles of whose creed is to defend the weak. You are one of the noble band united for the disinterested purpose of enlightening the world, and protecting the *canaille*."

" And you, my lord marquis," retorted Mr. Campbell, " belong, I suspect, to that portion of the aristocracy—Heaven be praised, it is but small!—who think only of their own pleasures, and are ready to exclaim, as a kingly voluptuary of a neighbouring kingdom once did, '*Après nous le déluge*.'"

" I do not, I confess, pretend to the sanctity of morals and patriotic aspirations of your set," was the rejoinder. " I do not wish that the lower orders should be taught to read and write, in order that, by keeping false accounts, they may be enabled to rob us with more facility and impunity. Instead of desiring, as you and your friends do, Mr. Campbell, to lighten the toil and increase the recreations of the *canaille*, my desire would be to leave them as their forefathers were, in their primitive state of ignorance, to wear out their lives in incessant labour, which would prevent their having time to meddle in political discussions, and give trouble to those born to rule them."

" Luckily, for the cause of humanity," replied Mr. Campbell, his face crimsoned with indignation, " the opinions and sentiments you have just uttered are now become so obsolete and unpopular that few would have the hardihood to pronounce them. You have used an expression, too, which, happily, does not exist in our language, and for which we have no synonyme. The word, so insulting, is now no longer spoken even in the country where it originated, and is not at all applicable to the English people—the finest, noblest race, under the sun."

" Bravo ! bravo, Campbell !" cried out some few members of the

club. "Campbell for ever!" "Campbell, the friend of the people! as your electors styled you."

"And the friend of the people I will remain while I breathe," said Campbell, "and I glory in belonging to that band who would extend the blessing of education to their poorer brethren, and ameliorate the hardships of their condition."

"I give you joy of the task. The labours of Hercules, in cleansing the Augean stable, will be light compared with yours, if you seek to purify the stolid and polluted minds of the rabble—I use that designation out of deference to your repugnance to the more expressive one, *canaille*."

"I deny that the minds of the English people *are* either stolid or polluted. They require but instruction—and their taste for that is every day becoming more developed—to render them what nature designed them to be, a wise and thinking people, taking a lively interest in the welfare and honour of their country, and contributing largely their share to both."

"This discussion is, I believe, Mr. Campbell, as little amusing to others as to me"

"You provoked it, and ironically styled me a patriot. Would I could deem myself really worthy of the title! I know not how I incurred your ire, unless it was by my stating that I had heard much of the generosity of Mr. Strathern."

"I never saw any proofs to justify this praise," replied Mountserratt, either forgetful of the frequent and liberal assistance formerly extended to him by Strathern, and never repaid, or else bent on stating a falsehood.

"He nevertheless bestowed a large sum on that poor fellow Olliphant," observed Mr. Campbell, "when those who had won thousands from that unhappy man are said to have refused him a few paltry hundreds with which to try his fortune in a distant land."

"I dare say, this large gift was all a story got up," remarked another. "People are not now-a-days so apt to throw away thousands."

"Assisting an old friend ought not to be termed throwing away money," said Mr. Campbell.

"Depend on it," observed another, "he must have committed numberless acts of folly, besides building that absurd house. He was always a sly fellow, and kept his vices out of public view."

"I understand that he gambled desperately in the funds," said one of the party.

"Very likely, for he was ever of a speculative turn," replied another.

"Some one hinted that he had given a certain foreign duc an enormous sum to prevent his bringing an action of damages against him, when some letters of his to the fair duchesse fell into her husband's hands," said Mr. Crawley.

"Come, come, that must be a tale got up in London, and by some untravelled scandal-monger, for all who know anything of the Continent must know that actions of damages for sins like that you have mentioned are there unknown."

"You don't mean to say that foreign women are better than our own?" demanded an elderly gentleman with spectacles, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, being occupied in writing a letter.

"Certainly not; I only mean that on the Continent, though ample causes exist for giving work to the gentlemen of the long robe, the frailties of wives are not exposed, to shame a husband and children, and to corrupt the readers of newspapers."

"And so the injured husband, as the phrase goes, is obliged to pocket the affront, and gets no healing plaster for the wound in the shape of five or ten thousand pounds adjudged him by twelve honest men as a compensation for the loss of his wife?"

"Certainly not; such a proceeding on his part would be deemed highly dishonourable."

"But, to return to Strathern," said Mr. Crawley; "some one mentioned, last night, that his ruin was effected by the smash of Messrs. Takein and Cheatall, in whose hands he placed a large capital, to lend out at sixty per cent."

"I can believe anything," observed an elderly man, who had been poring over the pages of a Sunday paper remarkable for the pungency of its attacks on the highest class.

"But this passes belief," said Mr. Campbell.

"Why so?—others have done the same," was the answer.

"You must not believe everything that Crawley says," remarked one of the group. "He acts on a principle wholly opposed to our English law; for he believes every man guilty of whatever crime he may be accused until the law has pronounced his innocence."

"The only plan to avoid being duped," replied Crawley.

"You saw a great deal of Strathern since he came back," said

the Marquis of Mountserratt, addressing Lord Francis Musgrove.

"No, not a great deal."

"Come, Franky, don't be sly;—why deny it?—for I saw you some half dozen times going to his room at the Clarendon."

"Yes," remarked another; "and I met a fellow yesterday who told me that Strathern had accepted bills for you."

"Some accommodation bills have certainly passed between us," replied Lord Francis Musgrove, unblushingly.

"Then you'll be in a pretty scrape," observed the marquis.

"Egad, I fear so!" answered Lord Francis; but it was devilish wrong of Strathern to take one in, by pretending to be rich."

"Should he get out of limbo, we shall have him asking all his old acquaintance to lend him money," said Crawley.

"What a bore!" remarked one of the party.

"The only way to avoid it is to cut him. I always cut acquaintances when they get ruined," observed Crawley.

"I thought you once experienced some inconvenience from acting on that principle," said the Marquis of Mountserratt.

"Why, it is sometimes rather dangerous, I confess; for poor men are apt to be proud, and resent being cut, as in the case to which you have referred. I should certainly have had a duel on my hands, only that my poor and proud adversary could not, as I had anticipated, find a friend to go out with him, so I got off. But really, jesting apart, a code of laws should be drawn up by us, the *élite* of society, to regulate the course to be pursued in such circumstances."

"A capital notion," said Lord Mountserratt, "and I would have it to run in the following form:—‘And be it enacted, that no nobleman or gentleman is to be expected to speak to or answer the letters of any ruined acquaintance, or former friend, or to give him what is called satisfaction, should he demand it, on the plea of being insulted. And be it further enacted, that any nobleman or gentleman infringing these regulations shall be excluded from this circle.’"

"Excellent, excellent!" exclaimed several of the party.

"No, no," vociferated Mr. Campbell, indignantly. "Such a code would dishonour humanity, and I know I can count on several of my friends, now absent, who would reject it as disdainfully as I do."

While this *persiflage* was amusing the members of——’s, Strathern was suffering under all the annoyances to which a proud and sensitive mind is susceptible, under his peculiar circumstances.

The news of his arrest had spread, like lightning, round the town. The consequence was, that payment for the few articles purchased since his arrival in London was peremptorily demanded, and he found himself considered and treated as one afflicted with the disease the most dreaded and carefully avoided in London—poverty. Of his *ci-devant* friend, Lord Francis Musgrove, and a host of other worthies of a similar kind, he saw no more, except at a distance in the streets, where they no sooner got a glimpse of him than they quickly retreated in another direction. The Marquis of Mountserratt showed more effrontery, for he coolly looked Strathern in the face, as if he had never previously beheld him, and passed on. For a moment Strathern's choler rose, and he was half tempted to follow him and demand satisfaction for this affront, but a little reflection taught him that such a worthless man was beneath his notice, and contempt took the place of anger in his breast.

Another bill of exchange, to a very large amount, was drawn by Lord Delmington on him, of which he was apprised by his bankers, with a notice that to meet it would not only take all the money of his lodged in their hands, but leave him their debtor for some hundreds. That his friend should require such large sums surprised while it greatly embarrassed Strathern, and he was deliberating on what steps he had best take to meet the pressing difficulties of the moment, when a letter reached him from Mr. Papworth, stating that he had, at length, and after many unexpected difficulties, succeeded in finding a person who was ready to lend the sum required to settle with Mr. Drinkwater, on the most reasonable terms, and that the money would be paid down as soon as the deed could be drawn. "This, be assured," wrote Mr. Papworth, "will be a much more advantageous arrangement for you than selling out of the funds when they are so very low as at present, so I earnestly advise you to adopt it."

Strathern wrote his assent to his solicitor, and settled with his bankers to pay the bill drawn on him by Lord Delmington; not, however, without one of the partners of the firm having taken the liberty of hinting to him that the giving *carte blanche* to draw on him to any friend—nay, even to one's nearest and dearest relation—was an imprudence that few, if any, ever committed without having cause to repent it. The very next post brought a letter from Lord Delmington, stating that he had that day discovered that his courier had forged his name to two bills of exchange to a large amount, and decamped with the money, leaving the whole

of his household bills at Naples unpaid, and himself consequently in great embarrassment. "I must therefore, my dear friend," wrote Lord Delmington, "ask you to lodge one thousand pounds, and send me a letter of credit to that amount, with as little delay as possible, for the robbery of this scoundrel has left me without a sous."

Never could a demand have arrived more inopportunistically. What was to be done? To apply to his bankers he knew would be, if not useless, at least humiliating, after the reflection made only the previous day by one of them on the subject of his liberality to this same friend. This renewed demand would confirm their belief in his imprudence, and were he to reveal the cause they would blame him still more for trusting to so careless a person as this transaction proved Lord Delmington to be. While he was occupied in painful reflections of how he was to meet his friend's wants with as little delay as possible, a waiter entered with the morning papers, one of which Strathern mechanically took up and ran his eyes over, when they became arrested by the following paragraph, headed, in large letters: "Death of the Marquis of Roehampton.—It is our painful task to announce the sudden demise of this excellent and lamented nobleman, which took place at his lordship's seat, Roehampton Castle, on the 29th inst., after an illness of only a few hours. The marquis is succeeded in his titles by his only son, the Earl of Delmington, now on the Continent, where he has been staying for some months for the recovery of his health."

"So here is an end to the embarrassments of my friend," thought Strathern. "Poor fellow! he will feel this event severely, for, stern and unkind as his father was, I know he yearned to be reconciled to him. Now my bankers will, I dare say, make no objection to accommodate the rich Marquis of Roehampton, whatever they might have done to the poor Lord Delmington. I only hope that my friend will live long to enjoy the vast fortune he inherits, and that he will have a son."

Strathern was not disappointed in his expectations. The bankers readily gave a letter of credit for double the amount Lord Delmington had written to his friend for—Strathern thinking it advisable to send that sum—nay, they even complimented him on the warmth and steadiness of his friendship to the absent marquis, proving that the poor earl of the previous day was viewed in a different light by them to the rich marquis of the present.

Strathern himself seemed to have risen in their estimation by his

friend's accession to wealth and dignity, and by the certainty which this accession afforded of the speedy repayment of the large sums he had so generously advanced to him.

"World! world!" thought he, as, pacing back to his hotel, he pondered on the events of the last few days, "how severe, yet how profitable are thy lessons to those willing to take advantage of them! How little can the rich judge of thee when all thy denizens to them wear ever a smiling countenance, and address them only with courtesy and respect! Bet let me not censure the world at large, because some of its members have been found unworthy. Should I not rather blame myself for having so ill-chosen my friends? But thus it ever is with those who, guilty of a culpable negligence in the choice of their associates, are disposed to fall into misanthropy, because they find themselves disappointed where, had they been more cautious, they would never have founded any hopes of a real friendship. Friendship!" thought Strathern, as he continued his meditations; "how grave is the import of the word, yet how lightly is it treated! It is a plant that strikes root only in a fine soil, and requires the rough winds of adversity to test its vigour. The effeminate luxury of our times is destructive to its existence, and it withers and dies in crowded cities, as does some hardy shrub, transplanted from its native earth, where the fresh breeze waved its leaves, to the artificial heat of a conservatory."

On entering his hotel, Strathern found an old gentleman, with a very prepossessing countenance, speaking to the porter.

"Here is Mr. Strathern," said the servant; but the old gentleman, who was deaf, did not hear him.

"My name is Strathern. May I inquire your business with me?"

"Mine, sir, is Vincent—a name probably unknown to you; but if you will favour me with a private interview of a few minutes, I will explain the motive for this intrusion."

Strathern courteously invited him to his room, and leading the way there, they were soon both seated, when Mr. Vincent thus addressed him—

"I am come, sir, to return you my warmest thanks for an act of kindness and generosity on your part towards a person very dear to me, and in whose welfare I take the most lively interest."

"I am not aware, sir, how I have merited these acknowledgments," replied Strathern.

"When I inform you, Mr. Strathern, that you see before you the uncle of Frederick Olliphant, whom you so generously assisted when

ruined by his own folly and association with persons against whom I frequently but unavailingly warned him, you will no longer be at a loss to comprehend my debt of gratitude to you. You must have thought me hard-hearted and unnatural towards my unfortunate nephew, the only son of a dear departed sister, and confided on her death-bed to my care. Believe me, I was not so, but I found it absolutely necessary to appear in that unamiable light, as the sole means of correcting my poor Frederick, and of exposing the selfishness and worthlessness of those supposed friends, from whom not all my counsel and entreaties could wean him. I had twice paid his debts, mounting to no small sums; and the last time with a threat—provoked by his defence of those very persons who had lured him into habits of ruinous extravagance and dissipation, and who had shamelessly profited by his inexperience and folly—to cast him off for ever if he again fell into the courses, from the inevitable results of which I had then, for the second time, rescued him. Even this threat did not prevent his again becoming the prey of his designing associates. My having twice paid such large sums for him led them to believe that I would still continue ready to extricate him, and pay them the sums they had won from him at play. Their conduct, equally heartless and shameless, effected that which all my advice, entreaties, and menaces had failed to produce, namely, a late, but full conviction of their utter worthlessness, and his own obstinate folly. Ashamed to throw himself once more on my kindness, and writhing under the sense of his sins and their insults, to what fatal step might my poor misguided nephew not have been hurried into, had you, sir, not reached out a hand to save him?” and here the old gentleman’s lips quivered with emotion, and he applied his handkerchief to his eyes.

“I was only too happy to be of use to an old friend, of whose goodness of heart I always entertained the highest opinion; and I must add, that the terms of gratitude and affection in which he named his obligations to you, Mr. Vincent, as well as his deep regret for having slighted your counsel, of the wisdom of which he had unhappily but too late become sensible, insured him my good will and regard.”

“Did he speak of me with gratitude and affection?” said the old man. “Ah! my poor boy! He little knew how my heart was pained while acting with a sternness so contrary to my nature, for what I believed to be the only means of opening his eyes to the real characters of those who had led him to ruin. And I, too, Mr. Stra-

them, misjudged him, for when I discovered, through the medium of a person I employed to find out how he was going on, that he was again plunged in debt, and harassed by his vile associates for the payment of his gambling debts to them, I imagined that his avoidance of me proceeded from hardness of heart, rather than from shame and contrition; and, instead of seeking the poor prodigal, and opening my arms to the penitent, I waited until he would implore the pardon I was ready to grant. But I waited in vain. A letter from on board the ship in which he embarked for Van Diemen's Land, and which was not to reach me until the vessel had sailed, first apprised me of the state of his feelings, his determination to become an exile from his native land, and your bounty, which had enabled him to put his intentions into effect with comfort and respectability.

“The letter was a heartrending one; and you may judge, Mr. Strathern, of my emotions on finding that the only relative I have—the being who, with all his errors, my heart still clung to—had left England for so remote a part of the globe, while I, a poor, old, solitary man, with no one on earth to love but him, was longing to pardon and take him to my arms again. When I had perused this sad letter, I searched the newspaper to find what day the *Fair Rosamond*—for so was the ship named—had actually sailed, and judge of my delight when I saw that she had put in at Portsmouth, and was there delayed by contrary winds. O, Mr. Strathern! never before that moment was I sensible of the advantage of railroads. To hurry off and depart by the next train was my first thought. Luckily, I caught it two minutes before it started, and, having reached Portsmouth, I ran to the Point more rapidly than I thought my old legs could ever again move, and found, to my unspeakable joy, that the *Fair Rosamond* was still wind-bound in the harbour. I instantly entered a boat, was rowed to the ship, and soon found myself in the arms of my poor boy, who, overjoyed to see me, wept like a child on my breast.

“Fain would he persuade me that he was unworthy to be restored to my favour—that he ought to go to the place of his destination, and there prove, by his steadiness and industry, his regret for the past, and his desire to atone for it. I had much difficulty in inducing him to return with me, and it was only by declaring my fixed determination to proceed with him—a step which, at my advanced age, and with my infirmities, would have been most unadvisable—that I won his assent to come on shore with me. He has

opened his whole heart to his old uncle, and I have poured the balm of pity and affection into it. Never did I love him so tenderly as now, and never did I feel so confident of his thorough and enduring reformation.

“It was only a few days ago that we came back to London, and ever since he has been confined to his room by a sprained ankle, or he would have been here ere this, to repeat to you again his and my eternal gratitude for your generosity and continued friendship at a time when he was not only abandoned, but insulted by his worthless companions, and to repay you the sum you so nobly lent him, when there was so little prospect of the poor fellow’s being ever able to refund it. Here is the money, sir, and, if it would not be deemed too great a liberty, I would venture to add that should you ever require a loan of ten times its amount, you will ever find me proud and happy to advance it on the shortest notice. My nephew’s first visit will be to you, and should you feel disposed to honour him by a call, I need not add what pleasure it will afford him and me to receive one who has proved himself so true a friend.”

Mr. Vincent took his departure, leaving Strathern agreeably impressed in his favour, and pleased that his kindness towards his old friend Olliphant had produced so salutary a result.

“Yes,” thought he : “all men are not cold-hearted and selfish, like the *clique* with whom I had the misfortune to fall in. The worthy man whom I have just seen, as well as his nephew, are proofs of this ; and an acquaintance with a few such men obliterates from the mind the proneness to misanthropy so apt to be engendered by a contact with the unworthy.”

The lessons of adversity, if received in a proper spirit, are admirably calculated, not only to open a man’s eyes to the hollowness and deceitfulness of what are called worldly friendships, but also to his own errors. Strathern’s trials, though far from being of so serious a nature as those which imprudence have entailed on many individual of his class, were, nevertheless, sufficiently mortifying to occasion him serious reflections. He saw how rash and foolish he had been in reposing such unlimited confidence in an architect of whom he had no knowledge, save the recommendation of an extravagant man of fashion, as thoughtless as himself ; and the penalty induced by this unwise measure made a deeper impression on his mind than all the recriminatory admonitions of Mr. Papworth had effected.

CHAPTER LI.

There's nought on earth more vile and base
Than those who sprung from noble race,
When they, for filthy lucre's sake,
Acquaintance with the low will make,
And hold communion with a mind
By education ne'er refined;
For vulgar great more vulgar far
Than lowly vulgar surely are."

"Well, you must allow, Lord Wellerby, little disposed as you in general are to give me credit, that I have succeeded in securing Olivia a very brilliant marriage," said Lady Wellerby to her lord, as they sat together *tête à tête*, the evening of the marriage of their daughter, previous to going to Lady Mountserratt's to play whist.

"You are always so ready to give yourself credit that there is little need of my paying you compliments, replied her surly husband. "Besides, I think it was the girl's own sharpness that secured the marriage. She had her wits about her, and knew what she was doing."

"But to whom does she owe her sharpness, I should like to know, Lord Wellerby? Is it not to my counsel, to my indefatigable zeal in pointing out to her the path she was to pursue?"

"You only did your duty, and certainly you took many years to catch a husband for Livy. A clever mother would have secured one long ago."

"Yes, if she had a reasonable husband to assist her schemes, and help her to play the fish caught on her bait, and to land them."

"The less men meddle in such work the better. For my part, I could never lend a hand to it, for the recollection of how I was hooked in myself would always prevent me from helping any other poor devil into such a scrape."

"Hooked in, my lord!"

"Yes, hooked in, my lady."

"My position and the numerous excellent offers of marriage I had received precluded the necessity of my condescending to use any arts to secure a husband."

"Why did you use them then?—for use them you positively did."

"Really, Lord Wellerby, you shock and humiliate me by such unfounded assertions."

"Then you should not provoke them. I'll tell you what, Lady Wellerby, I've remarked that whenever you begin to praise your own address and cleverness, it is but a preface to some demand on my purse; and, when I've been so stupid and thoughtless as to assent to your self-commendations, you at once pounce on me with a request for money. You cannot therefore be surprised that I am chary in my praises, knowing the unfair advantage that would be taken of them."

"Well, my lord, as you have *brusqué* the subject of money, without any delicacy to my feelings, I may as well state, without any further circumlocution, that I *am* in great want of some, and that I consider myself fully entitled to demand it after the enormous savings I have effected for you, in making Lord Fitzwarren believe that it was the husband, and not the father, who always furnished the *trousseau* and *corbeille*. Had I not done so, how heavy a sum would you have had to expend? And did I not manage, also, to make him pay for the *déjeuner*, as well as all other expenses incurred for the marriage? a thing never previously done by a bridegroom."

"And so you think the money saved on this occasion ought to find its way into your purse! What would be the advantage of saving on one side, if the savings were to go to the other, I should like to know?"

"You have such an extraordinary way of seeing things, Lord Wellerby! Can't you comprehend, that if I effect an economy of a large sum, I have a right to expect a per centage on it?"

"It must be a very small per centage, then, I can tell you."

"I do not expect a large one; one hundred pounds would....."

"One hundred devils! Where do you think I am to find hundreds to throw away on you?"

"You must have found them for the *trousseau* and *déjeuner* for our daughter's marriage, had not my address saved you?"

"Well, then, how much will satisfy you? As for a hundred pounds, it is wholly out of the question."

"Less than that sum would be inadequate to my wants."

"What your wants can be, hang me, if I can guess! Young women want money to buy finery and dress themselves out; but for old ones, whom no finery can make look well, I can't fancy what they can want money for."

"You will be so good as to remember, my lord, that I am your junior by some years."

"And what difference does that make? I acknowledge myself to be an old man; and, though you may be a couple of years younger—I know you are not more—that does not exempt you from being an old woman. You have not worn well, either, Lady Wellerby, if the truth must be told, for you look at least seven years older than you are."

"And you, my lord, ten. But what has my age to do in the present question? I want a hundred pounds—a sum too paltry to make such difficulties about."

"If I win at cards to-night, I'll let you have it to-morrow."

"You are sure to win; for you know that your vulgar adversary has not the slightest knowledge of the game. So you may as well give me a cheque for the money now. There is your writing-box, and your cheque-book is in it;" and her ladyship nimbly arose, brought the writing-box, and placed it before him.

He wrote the cheque, grumbling all the time he did so; and, having handed it to his wife, said, "Have you yet arranged for making a new agreement with the master of this hotel for our repasts?"

"No; I have not had time."

"Let it be done then as soon as possible. The reduction in our family will make a considerable difference in our bills. As Sophy has a double-bedded room, your maid can occupy the second bed, and that will save paying for her room."

"Sophy won't approve this arrangement; and, as my maid's room is nothing more than a closet, I don't think any saving will be effected by it."

"Ascertain this point, and, if you find a few francs, or even pauls, a week can be saved, remember I don't care a pin whether Sophy likes it or not. I wish we could get her off our hands. Daughters, at best, are a great plague to have; for one is obliged to be civil to every puppy or fool who would be a good *parti*, in hopes of catching him; but, when girls are plain, as is the case with ours, they are a heavy weight on one's hands. Sophy, too, is rather plainer than Livy."

"I don't agree with you, for she has something very piquant in her face."

"You say that because she is as like you as possible, Lady We

lerby. The only piquant thing in her face that I can see is a nose so sharp that it looks as if it could cut like a knife."

"Better than have one like a tomato," replied the lady, glancing spitefully at the red nose of her husband, which grew redder at this remark.

"I think, with a little good management, we might arrange to be invited to dinner every day with Lady Mountserratt, instead of having to pay for our dinners at home," said Lord Wellerby, after a few minutes' reflection.

"But only think what a bore it will be."

"Do you call it a bore to get a much better dinner and wine than we can afford to have at our own expense?"

"If she were less vulgar, it might be bearable, but really she is insupportable."

"Not a bit more so than many of your friends. And, even if she were, good dinners and wine, free of all cost, are worth making some sacrifices for. Try and manage this. Throw out some hints about *our* being so much less well served than she is, and you can add something about our feeling so *triste* without Livy, that we hate sitting down to dinner at home."

"As you wish it, I will, my lord: but indeed I should infinitely prefer poorer fare at home."

"Come, let us be off: it is ten o'clock by my watch. Ring for Sophy to go with us."

The Wellerbys found Lady Mountserratt and her *dame de compagnie* still seated at dessert, with a profusion of rare fruit and wines on the table.

"Bless me, is it so late?" said the marchioness, striking her repeater. "I dined later than usual, for my appetite was spoiled by the wedding breakfast, and yet to pass away the time without dining was more than I could do. What would become of one if the long hours were not broken by one's meals? *Déjeuners*, and early dinners always set me wrong for the day, and the only way I can recover myself is to sit down to a late dinner, when all is over, just as if I had eaten nothing before. Will you have some fruit and a glass of wine, my lord and ladies? it will do you good, depend on it, for you all look as jaded as if you had been up all last night."

Lady Wellerby and her daughter declined the offer; but her lord, reflecting that the more wine his hostess drank, the less able would she be to attend to her whist, he accepted the proffered fruit, and af-

fect to drink the wine, taking care, unperceived by the marchioness, to dilute it plentifully with water.

“I am glad I have some one to keep me in countenance,” observed the lady, “for I really feel that I require an extra glass of wine to-day. Weddings are melancholy things—at least, I find them so; but this is only natural in my case, for they must always remind me of my own. Heighho! when I think that I have been but so short a time married, and that, instead of having a loving husband to share my joys and cares, ‘to have and to hold for better for worse,’ as the parson said, and to have the prospect of a son and heir, who would be a marquis after his father was no more, I stand alone in the world, just as if I had dropped down from the clouds, with no one to care whether I am sick or sorry, I almost wish I had never become a great lady, and had remained poor and contented among my own equals, with whom I might have been happy.”

“You must not give way to such gloomy reflections, my dear marchioness; you have friends, and will, doubtlessly, form many more,” said Lady Wellerby.

“You are fatigued and nervous; let me recommend you another glass of wine,” added her husband.

“Well, I don’t care if I try another glass. I don’t know what’s the matter with me; I don’t enjoy my meals as I used to do; and wine, which used to elevate my spirits, now only cheers me for a little while, and then I become lower than ever.”

“Living so much alone is the cause, you may be assured, my dear marchioness,” answered Lady Wellerby. “You require cheerful society at dinner; friends who would induce you to eat and drink a little more. Society is everything for persons subject to low spirits.”

“But how am I to have it, if I don’t know people?”

“I’m sure my family would be delighted to give you as much of their company as you wished,” said Lord Wellerby.

“Well, then, suppose you all come and dine with me every day while we stay at Naples, and bring any pleasant people you happen to know with you.”

“But would not that be trespassing too much on your hospitality, my dear lady? If, indeed, you would dine with us on alternate days,” added Lady Wellerby, with one of her most winning smiles, while her husband looked aghast, lest his wife’s rash proposal should be accepted.

“No,” replied the marchioness; “let it be as I wish. I prefer dining at home, and will really be glad if you will all dine with me every day; but mind you try and bring some pleasant people with you just for sake of variety, for one gets tired of having always the same faces at dinner, just as one does of having the same dishes;” a truth which the Wellerby family felt it would have been more civil of their hostess to have suppressed. Having, however, gained the point her lord wished, Lady Wellerby cast a triumphant look at him, which expressed, as plainly as a look could do, “See how cleverly I manage everything, and without compromising our dignity either.” But her lord affected not to see the glance, or to appear conscious of the success of her scheme, lest it should hereafter be cited against him as a ground for claiming remuneration.

Lady Wellerby and her daughter impatiently waited for the marchioness to leave the *salle à manger*, in which the mingled odours of savoury *plats*, fruit, and wine rendered their stay very disagreeable; while Mrs. Bernard, blushing to her very temples at seeing Lady Mountserratt expose her unfeminine *penchant* for wine so openly before strangers, kept casting imploring glances towards her, in order to induce her to leave the room. The courier, who knew the predilection of his liege-lady for the pleasures of the table, took care that she should not be interrupted in the enjoyment of them by too early a summons to coffee: it was, therefore, not until the patience of the ladies was quite exhausted that he announced that it was served in the drawing-room; and the marchioness, taking the offered arm of Lord Wellerby, walked with unsteady steps to that apartment. Having done due honour to the copious supply of cakes, served with tea, and Mr. Webworth having made his appearance, Lady Mountserratt said, “Well, as there are four of us, I suppose I *must* play whist; not that the game at all amuses me, for, if the truth must be told, I had rather sit chatting than playing cards.”

“Then I hope you will not play on our account,” replied Lady Wellerby, “for I should be sorry that you stood on ceremony with us.”

Lord Wellerby glanced angrily at his wife, fearing that their hostess might avail herself of this civil speech, and decline cards; but a thought having crossed the half-bewildered brain of that lady that her declining whist might be looked on as originating in a dread of losing her money, she instantly declared that, however bad

her luck might be, she was determined to show her visitors that *she* was not to be daunted.

“Thall we cuth for pathneus?” said Mr. Webworth.

“Lord Wellerby and I are such old-fashioned persons that we make it a point always to play together,” replied the countess.

“Ith thath quithe fair?” demanded Webworth; “and won’t ith be a vewy gweat dithadvantage to your opponenth, playing against two persons, who, having been pathneus so long, must thoroughly know each other’s play?”

“That’s what I think, too,” observed the marchioness, “for I have noticed that my lord and lady always win. Suppose, therefore, we cut for partners, as Mr. Webworth has proposed.”

“If you insist on it, certainly,” said Lord Wellerby, looking anything but pleased at the proposal.

“Yes, let us cut, let us cut, by all means,” rejoined the hostess, suiting the action to the word, and, to her great satisfaction, it was decided by the drawing of the cards that she was to be the partner of Lord Wellerby, while his lady became the partner of Mr. Webworth.

“What are you dreaming of, Mrs. Bernard?” demanded the marchioness, looking angrily at her *dame de compagnie*. “Don’t you see that Lady Sophia wants something to divert her? Open them books—I forget what you call them—that have the pretty pictures in ’em. And pretty they ought to be; for they cost me a mint of money. Would you believe it, Lady Sophia? every drawing in that book, for all they are so small, and have so little bright colours in ’em, cost me twenty—ay, and thirty pounds a piece: for when I heard that the Duchess of Castle Bellingham had employed the best painters to make a book for her, I determined that I’d have as good a one. Not that I care a pin about pictures, but just to let people see that I’d have as dear a picture-book as her.” Lady Sophia seated herself at a table, on which Mrs. Bernard, having drawn out the beautifully-bound album from its morocco case, placed it, and began turning over the leaves.

“What queer people poets are!” observed Lady Mountserratt. “When I heard that the Duchess of Castle Bellingham had a book all filled with poems, written in it by the greatest poets of the day, I thought I’d have one, too, and I made my *dam de compang* write to all those whose names I could learn, to offer them their own terms for a copy of verses to be made on me, and written in my book. Would you believe it, ladies and gentlemen?—not one of them ever answered the letters; though why they should not write

for my money as readily as they do when a publisher pays 'em I can't imagine ; or why they should not be paid for verses as painters are for drawings, I can't make out."

"I must entreat your attention to the game, dear Lady Mountserratt," observed Lord Wellerby.

"Oh, botheration to the game !" was the answer, the wine she had drunk now beginning to show its effects on the lady.

"Her ladyship has w'enounced," said Mr. Webworth.

"Is it me ? Not I !—I never renounced in all my life, so don't be charging me with any such crime. I'm above doing anything low or mean of the kind," and the lady's colour assumed the tint of a peony from anger, at what she considered to be an accusation of unfair play.

"Bless me, madam ! I never meant to insinuate anything in the least offensive," replied Mr. Webworth. "You were wrong through mistake, while you were speaking about your album."

"And couldn't you say so at first ? There's nothing affronting in saying I revoked—every one knows that. But when you say I renounced, it's quite a different thing."

There was something so very comical in Webworth's look of utter astonishment at this speech, that, albeit unused to indulge in laughter, Lady Wellerby could not control her risibility, though her husband cast an angry glance at her.

"What's the joke, my lady ?" demanded the marchioness. "It must be something mighty good, for I never saw you laugh before. Let us have a share in it."

Lord Wellerby felt on thorns, and though very unwilling to lose the game he was playing, which the fact of Lady Mountserratt's having revoked would occasion, he was hardly sorry when Mr. Webworth again reminded him that the revoke made Lady Wellerby and him the winners.

"Well, I can afford to lose—that's one comfort," observed the lady, somewhat ruffled, however, by the loss of the game ; but when, on commencing the next, she misdealt, Lord Wellerby began to think that he was now likely to suffer for having encouraged her to drink wine, for it became evident to him that she hardly knew the cards she had been playing.

"The worse luck now, the better another time," said the marchioness ; "and I have such confidence in Lord Wellerby's play that I am willing to bet twenty—ay, twenty-five pounds on the rubber, either with Lady Wellerby or her partner."

"I am willing to bet," replied Mr. Webworth; "but, as we have won one game of the rubber, I must bet you the odds."

"What's the odds to me? I offered you a fair bet, and now you sit there higgling about it, as if I wanted to take an unhandsome advantage of you."

"You mistake me, I assure your ladyship."

"Not at all. First you accuse me of renouncing, which certainly was not very polite to a lady, and of my high rank, too; and now you refuse—at least hum and haw about betting with me."

"I'll take your bet, dear Lady Mountserratt," said Lady Wellerby, eagerly. "Twenty-five pounds on the rubber, if you please. We ladies understand each other better than gentlemen do. They are always plaguing about the odds."

"I'll make it fifty, instead of twenty-five pounds, just to show this gentleman," and she glanced disdainfully at Mr. Webworth, "that I don't value money, and that I don't nor won't bother my brains about odds and ends. So mind, Lady Wellerby, our bet is fifty pounds."

"It is quite understood," replied the lady, as she assorted her cards carefully, and with eager eyes took in the trumps.

"Well, people may call this what they will," observed Lady Mountserratt, her face getting more red, her eyes darting angry flashes, her right foot beating time on the carpet, and her coarse red fingers clumsily twitching the cards, "but if this be pleasure, I don't know what the word means. I'd rather give up the game at once than sit looking at such a horrid hand."

Lord Wellerby bit his lip. "Pray don't despair, dear madam," observed he, making a violent effort to subdue his anger.

"Despair, indeed!—who told you I despaired? All I meant was that I hate bad cards. Here's the only trick I can make," and the lady threw down the ace of trumps.

"Oh, why did you lead trumps!" asked Lord Wellerby.

"Because I liked it, and if that reason doesn't satisfy you, because I had but one, and wished to make them," nodding at her adversaries, "play down two for it."

Again Lady Mountserratt revoked, and the rubber was lost.

"We have won two bumpers," exclaimed Mr. Webworth.

"And I have won fifty pounds," said his partner.

"Then if *you* have won two bumpers, I don't see why my lord and I shouldn't have two also. For my part, I never felt so thirsty in my life; I suppose it is from that devilled chicken I ate at

dinner. Ring the bell, Mrs. Bernard, and order some iced champagne."

"I'll settle my points with Lady Wellerby," said her lord.

"Then I suppose I'm to pay you, Mr. What's-your-name. How much is it?"

"Only ten guineas, as we did not bet on the rubber."

"And fifty pounds to me," said Lady Wellerby.

"Ay, *you'll* be sure not to forget it," replied the marchioness, "for this is the second time within the last three minutes, that you've told me of it."

"I was not aware that I had named it before."

"I thought as much," observed Lady Mountserratt, winking her eye, and her countenance assuming an expression of broad humour, that provoked a laugh even from the grave Webworth, and a smile from Lord Wellerby. "I'm sure if I forgot the dirty half hundred, as the people in Ireland used to call the 50th regiment of foot, you'd never be the woman to say a word more about it. Not you, in troth, for *you* don't care about money, and would just as soon *lose* as *win*!"

Unaccustomed to this coarse mode of bantering, Lady Wellerby felt exceedingly embarrassed under it, but dreaded provoking a new attack, by making any answer.

"Bring me my cheque-book, that I may pay Lady Wellerby, for fear her ladyship's memory should fail her about it. Mr. Behworth, or Webworth, here's your money, and with it let me give you one piece of advice—never accuse a lady of renouncing, for no lady of real rank will stand it, I can tell you, although some may pass it over for once in a way, if they happen to be in their own houses or apartments, which are much the same, just to show that they understand good breeding."

"I weally, madam, musth noth allow your ladyship to wemain under a false impwession with wegard to what I said."

"Then would you have me doubt my own ears? Didn't I hear the word?"

"Yeth, madam, but you have mistaken its meaning."

"Thank you, sir; I'm sure it's very polite of you to tell me I don't understand English."

"Weally, madam, you quite pain me by such a supposition."

"Now, how would you like it if I was to tell you that you lisp so much that I can hardly make out what you say? would you think it

genteel of me? Yet, it's the honest truth, though I'm too polite to say such a thing."

Mrs. Bernard now returned with the cheque-book, and the marchioness told her to write a cheque for fifty pounds, to which she would put her signature.

"Was it not guineas?" asked Lady Wellerby. "I thought we always betted in guineas."

"Always when *you* win, my lady," replied the marchioness, winking and nodding; "so guineas let it be. Write down guineas, Mrs. Bernard."

The cheque written out, Lady Mountserratt signed and handed it to Lady Wellerby.

"Is it quite right, ma'am?" asked she. "Are you sure there's no mistake?"

"I dare say it is perfectly correct," replied Lady Wellerby, affecting not to examine it.

"Well, if you'd 'own the truth, and shame the devil,' you'd confess that there is not a lady of all your acquaintance that stands losing fifty guineas as well as I do."

"All ladies of high breeding lose their money without losing their tempers," observed Lady Wellerby, piqued into the remark by the insulting glances of her hostess.

"Do they, indeed! Well, I'm mighty glad to hear it, and I'd be gladder still to see it; for, as your ladyship is the only lady of high breeding I ever played cards with, and as you always, by some chance or another, happen to win, I have had no opportunity of judging how you'd stand losing."

The champagne now made its appearance, and a large glass being filled for the marchioness, she raised it to her lips, nor withdrew it until it was empty.

"There's nothing like champagne, after all," said she. "Won't you have a glass, my lady, and you, Lady Sophia? 'Twill do you good."

"I'll take a little mixed with iced water, if you will permit me," replied Lady Wellerby.

"Now, don't you think it a sin and a shame to spoil fine wine, that costs so much, by mixing it with water?"

"I never drink plain wine, neither does my daughter."

"Oh! you don't, don't you? More fools you and she. You'd look a deuced sight better if you did, I'm quite sure, so the sooner you begin the better. I always wondered what made you look so

half dead and alive, with your eyes for all the world like those of a dead cod-fish; but now that you tell me you never drug any plain wine, I know the cause."

Lady Wellerby's pale face turned red with anger, which her hostess observing, and now growing reckless, as the effect of a second large bumper of champagne began to make itself felt on her, she burst into a loud laugh, and exclaimed: "Now only look at her ladyship, see what a fine colour she has got. If merely talking to you of champagne makes you so red, only think what drinking it would do. Do be advised by me, and take a glass."

"I have always disliked wine, madam," said Lady Wellerby, unable any longer to control her anger, "and my acquaintance with your ladyship has not decreased my horror of its effect on women."

"Oh! it hasn't, has it? Well, though you have wrapped up your speech in genteel words, just for all the world as you English cover up potatoes in damask napkins, though they are not any better for the finery, I am quite sure you meant to be uncivil to me; and, as you say your dislike to wine has increased since you knew *me*, I'll just take the liberty to tell you that my dislike to grand ladies has increased terribly since I've known *you*."

"Lord Wellerby, I think it's quite time for us to retire," said Lady Wellerby, rising, with an air of affected dignity, from her chair.

"I am sure," replied his lordship, looking daggers at his wife, "that Lady Mountserratt had no intention of offending you, and consequently I must make peace between you."

"Why, it was she who offended me. Who began it, I should like to know?" asked the marchioness.

"My dear lady, permit me to be the peacemaker. Lady Wellerby, I am quite sure, would not, on any account, say or do anything to occasion you the least pain. Allow me to place this fair hand," and he took the coarse red one of his hostess in his, "in the hand of Lady Wellerby."

"I never meant the least offence," murmured Lady Wellerby, approaching the marchioness, who extended her hand, saying, "I never bear malice, so shake hands—but mind you, only on one condition, and that is, that you drink my health in a glass of plain wine before we part. You shall have your own choice of the liquor."

Lord Wellerby made signs to his wife instantly to accede to the terms of reconciliation proposed; and she, reflecting on the chance

of future wagers to be won from the obtuse and vulgar Irishwoman, yielded her assent.

“Suppose we have a bit of supper together,” said the marchioness, rubbing her hands, and looking, “on hospitable thoughts intent.” “A broiled bone, devilled legs of chickens, broiled ham, and anything else that can be had, and make a jolly night of it.”

“And play another rubber of whist to give you your revenge,” added Lord Wellerby.

“No, no more cards to-night,” replied the marchioness, “for I feel, somehow or another, rather bothered in the head, and card-playing would only make me worse. To-morrow evening I will play as many rubbers as you like.”

“Then, as your head aches, my dear madam,” said the peer—seeing that nothing more was to be had out of his hostess that night—“I must advise your retiring early to your pillow, and not supping, and I must insist on our leaving you to your repose. Good night, good night;” and off went the party, leaving the marchioness to sup alone.

CHAPTER LII.

When Hymen's torch by Love's not lit,
 No happiness can wedlock give;
 And Time in vain will strive to knit
 Hearts doom'd in discord still to live :
 For Love alone the charm contains
 To cover o'er with blooming flow'rs
 The bonds which else are galling chains,
 And make them light through all life's hours.

Little of interest marked the journey of the bride and bridegroom, the Earl and Countess of Fitzwarren, from Naples to Paris. The object for which the adroit flatteries of the lady had been so constantly exercised having been attained, she no longer thought it necessary to continue them, or even to show the husband any one of those numerous attentions which it had been her wont to heap on the lover. His carelessness and indifference before marriage had wounded her vanity and piqued her self-love, and, goaded on by the recollection, she, with a short-sighted policy that argued

as little for her understanding as for her good nature, was disposed to prove her resentment for former slights on his part, by now evincing a coldness and negligence towards him on hers.

Nor was Lord Fitzwarren slow to mark the change. Though an obtuse man in some things, he was not an unfeeling one in aught that regarded the affections, consequently he was hurt to observe the change in his wife's manners; but, with the good nature peculiar to him, joined to the vanity from which no man is exempt, he was willing to find an excuse for it in the jealousy which he suspected might have originated in her breast from the recollection of his unlover-like apathy before their nuptials.

"Poor thing," would he sometimes say to himself; "I dare say she is tormented by the memory of my former coldness, or perhaps she has discovered how desperately in love I was with another. Ah! if that other had but smiled on me, how happy, how unutterably blessed should I now have been! Only to fancy Louisa Sydney as my bride, seated by me in this carriage, and whirled along as rapidly as four horses could draw us, makes my heart beat quicker. To gaze on her beautiful profile, and then to look in the front glass for the reflection of her full face, oh, what rapture would it be! No, never was there so lovely, so angelic a creature. But I must try to banish her from my thoughts—must remember that the happiness of another is now committed to my care; that I have sworn before the altar to love and cherish her who now bears my name, and that I am guilty of a sin in thus allowing my thoughts to wander to the only woman I ever really loved. How indulgent should the consciousness of these very thoughts render me towards the spleen and coldness of poor Livy! Women, I have always heard, are so wonderfully quick-sighted in affairs of the heart, that who knows if my unhappy bride may not at this very moment be enduring pangs sharper than those I feel!—for jealousy, as I know by experience, can inflict torture. Poor Livy! Although I cannot command my heart to love you, I will at least endeavour to conceal the passion that still lurks there for another, and I will bear with patience the sullenness and coldness which jealousy prompts, conscious that I cannot requite your affection."

What a healing salve is vanity! Without its soothing influence how much less kind should we be, and how much sooner should we perceive facts, that, shaded by its opaque veil, escape detection. But, although vanity frequently interposes a veil between painful truths and our common sense, it also adds poignancy to the

discovery of aught that humiliates our self-love. Thus, while in the good-natured Lord Fitzwarren it rendered him so pitying and forbearing towards the change of manner in his countess, in *her* it produced the most contrary effect, and, instead of conciliating his esteem by a continuance of those attentions and that display of tenderness which had lured him to become her husband, she seemed bent on letting him perceive that his former indifference was now quite equalled by her own.

“You don’t enjoy travelling, Livy, I fear,” observed Lord Fitzwarren, after a long silence, during which his thoughts had wandered to one who occupied them much more frequently than was consistent either with his duty or happiness, as the husband of another.

“Not particularly,” was the reply. “To enjoy travelling, one must have a lively companion, and I don’t think you are peculiarly so.”

“Yes, she has divined the subject of my thoughts, and is jealous, poor soul,” thought the bridegroom. “Do you like Paris?” resumed he, desirous of keeping up a conversation, to atone for his previous silence.

“I can hardly say; for Paris to me was always a scene of trial. I saw around me on every side a thousand pretty things I longed, but had not the power, to buy, and this put me out of temper.”

“You will now, my dear Livy,” and he took her hand and pressed it, “see Paris under more agreeable auspices; for it will give me pleasure to enable you to buy all that you fancy.”

No returned pressure of the hand, no kind word or look, denoted her gratitude for this good-natured declaration, and her husband felt disappointed at her ungraciousness. Nevertheless, determined to enact the amiable, he resumed—

“I have always thought that one of a man’s enjoyments, during the first months of marriage, is the pleasure of loading his bride with pretty things. Women are so differently treated, with regard to pecuniary matters, during their maidenly days to what men are—we being accustomed to have large sums at our disposal, and to expend money as our fancy prompts, without having to consult or render an account to any one; while you are seldom allowed a liberal supply of pocket-money, and, even in the expenditure of the sum allotted, have in general to be guided by the advice of mothers.”

“Very true; and this is one of the reasons which makes girls so

anxious to be married that they overlook many defects in him who has the means of gratifying their tastes and furnishing the advantages for which they have so long pined."

There was something so heartless and selfish in this observation that Lord Fitzwarren, feeling hurt by it, relapsed again into silence. He was tempted to say that he hoped all women were not influenced by such interested motives in entering the married state, but he feared such an observation might imply that he was offended or captious, so he remained silent.

"What a bore travelling is!" exclaimed Lady Fitzwarren; "I wish I had thought of bringing some amusing novel with me."

This rude speech carried neither oil nor wine to the wound inflicted by her previous ones, and, notwithstanding Lord Fitzwarren's extreme good nature, disposed him but little to make any further efforts to maintain a conversation with his bride. Was it possible that he had been the dupe of a woman who had lured him into marriage by pretending an affection for him, that it was but too clear, from her present conduct, she had never really entertained? was the painful reflection that now entered his mind. The ill-humour originating in jealousy he could readily pardon, for there was nothing offensive to his self-love in that; but to be the victim to a heartless creature, whose person had never attracted him, and who only caught him by affecting a boundless attachment, and an entire submission to his will, was so humiliating, that his pride was wounded to the quick by the supposition, and he execrated his own folly and weakness in having been so duped.

Lord Fitzwarren was not prone to indulge long in reflection. Hitherto he had been wont to gratify every desire that arose in his breast that money could accomplish, and it was only when rejected by Miss Sydney that he found there were some blessings that wealth could not secure. His reflections on that discovery were so painful that he fled from them to the society of the Ladies Wellerby, whose flatteries soothed his wounded vanity, and gained for one the prize they had both so long and assiduously sought. But if now, having paid so heavy a price for the flattery, it was to be henceforth withheld from him, and, in its place, an undisguised indifference and rudeness adopted, how should he support so cruel and unexpected a change? Painful thoughts have in general the effect of banishing sleep, but whether it was their novelty or the drowsiness often produced by unbroken silence, and the rapid movement of a carriage, which occasioned the disposition to slumber in this instance.

we are not prepared to say; but the fact was, Lord Fitzwarren *did* fall asleep, and by certain nasal sounds soon gave proof that he was actually under the benign influence of Morpheus.

"Lord Fitzwarren, Lord Fitzwarren!" exclaimed his wife, shaking him rudely by the arm, "will you have done snoring?"

He started, rubbed his eyes, and said, "Did I indeed snore?"

"Snore!" reiterated the lady, looking daggers; "I never heard such sounds before. To sleep in a carriage, leaving me to my own reflections, and they are anything but pleasant, I can assure you, was bad enough, but to snore as you have done is so wholly insupportable that, rather than again submit to it, I must give up travelling in the same carriage with you."

"I am sorry I annoyed you," replied Lord Fitzwarren. "I was not aware that I snored, for, though I have had several travelling companions, no one of them ever accused me of this disagreeable infirmity."

"Probably not, as you generally were accompanied by some led captain, some toady, like Mr. Webworth, who, not being able to have a carriage of his own, was too glad to be offered a seat in yours, to complain of any of your peculiarities, however disagreeable they might be."

"Led captains! toadies! Really, madam, I know not whether you most surprise or offend me, by the style you have adopted."

"And I, my lord, can assure you, that the specimen you have given me of your agreeability as a travelling companion will preclude my ever again trusting myself in a post-chaise with you for more than fifty miles as long as I live. What would the world say, I should like to know, if it were told that a bridegroom, ere three days married, sank back in his seat to sleep, snoring as only some huge dog after a great fatigue does, while his unfortunate wife was left to think on her humiliating position?"

"Do not provoke me into recrimination, madam, lest I utter truths in a moment of anger that you as well as I may afterwards wish unsaid."

"Pray, put no more constraint on your words, my lord, than you have on your actions. Nothing that you can say could be more offensive than your resigning yourself to sleep and snoring. Such conduct proves a total disregard not only of my feelings, but of the common decencies of life!"

"I am ready to admit, madam, that it was not polite, but the

fault was not entirely mine. I endeavoured to beguile the route by conversing, but you gave so little encouragement to my efforts to maintain a conversation, and seemed so little disposed to contribute your share, that it is hardly to be wondered at that it dropped, and that I fell asleep."

"I require no apologies, my lord, so pray offer none."

"Do not provoke me too far, Livy;" and Lord Fitzwarren's lips became tremulous and his face pale, as he uttered the caution.

"Lest you should forget that I am a woman and you a gentleman, I suppose," replied the lady with a withering glance.

"No, you have no personal violence to dread from me, madam. No provocation could make me forget what is due to your sex, and my own"—and Lord Fitzwarren spoke no more.

The angry feelings engendered on this occasion rankled in the breasts of both husband and wife so strongly that on the slightest cause they were ready to burst into a flame; and Lady Fitzwarren, actuated by the love of domineering, and a belief that by not yielding any deference to her husband's wishes or opinions during the first year of their union, she should ultimately acquire a perfect ascendancy over him, and secure her own unquestioned independence, took no step towards conciliation. Never was a *tête à tête* journey so unsocial, or repasts so wholly uncheered by good will, or those little attentions that give them their greatest charms, as was this first journey of Lord and Lady Fitzwarren; but as all journeys, like that of life, must end, they at length reached Paris, where it had been determined to make a stay of some weeks, but not without having on the route made some discoveries that led to their being mutually convinced how utterly unsuited they were to each other. The discovery was much more painful to the gentleman than to the lady, for *he*, deceived by the readiness with which, previous to their ill-assorted marriage, she had adopted all his opinions, and affected to participate in his tastes, expected to find not only a fond wife, but a partial admirer. Her flatteries had won him, and he anticipated a continuance of the same honeyed food, which the lady, now that she had achieved her object, was no longer disposed to furnish.

They took up their abode in the Hôtel de la Terrasse, Rue de Rivoli, where their courier had engaged the best suite of rooms; and here the lady first began to experience the long-desired advantages of being the wife of a nobleman of large fortune. Ere she had left her

dressing-room, the morning after her arrival, the ante-room to it was filled with *modistes*, silkmercers, *cordonniers*, and *couturières*, with the choicest specimens of their respective wares, in compliance with the instructions of *madame la comtesse*, forwarded to them through the medium of her courier before she had arisen from her pillow.

When Lord Fitzwarren, on leaving his room, beheld the levée that was waiting to have an audience with his wife, he ventured to knock at her door, and entreat that she would postpone seeing these persons until after breakfast, as he was very hungry, and consequently impatient for that repast.

"Don't wait for me," said his lady bride, "for I shall breakfast in my dressing-room."

"Do, pray, let us breakfast together," urged his lordship, "for I hate breakfasting alone."

"And I hate breakfasting with any one; so you must never expect me to share that matinal meal."

"But won't you let me see the pretty things you are going to buy, and let me give you some of my selection?"

"No, thank you, I like to please myself, and men know nothing at all of such matters."

"They are only good to pay for finery, I suppose," thought the mortified husband, as he entered the breakfast-room, and rang to order his *déjeuner*. "And let me have the Galignani newspaper," said he to the servant.

"*Madame la comtesse* has it in her room, milord," was the reply.

He went again to the door of his wife's dressing-room, and requested she would lend him the newspaper.

"I have not yet read it," was the answer.

"But you can't read it while you are dressing or examining the various things brought for your inspection," observed Lord Fitzwarren, "and I will send it back to you in a quarter of an hour."

"How can you be so tiresome?" replied the lady. "I really cannot allow you to have it, so do let me dress."

Lord Fitzwarren returned to the breakfast-room, but no symptoms of *déjeuner* appearing, he tried to beguile the time by looking out of the window, beating time on the panes, chasing the flies—he was too humane to kill them—and whistling, not for want of thought, but with the desire to get rid of some very disagreeable ones which filled his mind.

“Well, this is pleasant, it must be confessed,” thought he, but the expression of his countenance betrayed that there was really nothing pleasant in his position. “Here I am alone and neglected. As a single man, I never felt so uncomfortable, for then I always had some pleasant fellow to breakfast with me, the newspapers laid on my table, and was not kept kicking my heels about as at present.” He rang the bell angrily, and commanded his courier to be sent to him. When that person made his appearance, Lord Fitzwarren, more angrily than he had ever addressed him before, demanded “why his breakfast was not served, and the newspaper not on his table?”

“Vera sorre, milord, *mais* miladi commanded dat de journal be always sent to her de first, and commanded de *déjeuner* to be served in her dressing-room, so I tought milord would breakfast vid miladi dere. But I vill go and have de *déjeuner* served here *tout de suite*,” and off ran the *courrier*, saying to himself, “Ah! *pauvre* milord, *pauvre* milord! He not de first to be served now, miladi *she* de first vill have everyting for herself, and not care von pin for anybody else in de world. *Méchante femme, méchante femme!*”

When Lord Fitzwarren had got through his solitary breakfast, and never had he enjoyed one so little, the *menu* for dinner was presented by the *courrier*, who said, “Miladi has commanded de *plats* she prefers, but I tought milord would like to order somedings for himself.”

Lord Fitzwarren made a few additions to the bill of fare, and then deputed the *courrier* to inquire of Mademoiselle Claudine, the *femme de chambre* of his wife, at what hour Lady Fitzwarren desired the carriage to be ready, and whether she wished him to accompany

“Miladi not want milord at all,” was the answer brought back; “and de carriage is to be at de door at two o’clock.”

The husband bit his lip, and left the hotel in anything but a good humour, heartily wishing that he had never beheld his countess, or that the chain that bound him to her was not indissoluble.

“I used not to think her so ugly as she now appears in my eyes,” thought he, as he strolled up the Place Vendôme. “When I was such a fool as to propose to her, I really thought her tolerable. But then she was all smiles, and so good-natured and civil that it was impossible to think her ugly.”

Flattery is so agreeable and intoxicating a draught that it not only deceives those to whom it is administered, with regard to their own

qualities, but induces them to believe that those who offer it are agreeable. How can people regard those who render them pleased with themselves with any other than pleasurable emotions? Lady Fitzwarren's adulation blinded her lord to her plainness, but now that it was offered to him no more, he became painfully sensible of the fact. Occupied by painful thoughts, he was glad when he met an old acquaintance, Sir Henry Elgood, in the street. This gentleman, like himself, was whiling away the time by a ramble, so they joined company, and, at the request of Lord Fitzwarren, proceeded to the stables of the horsedealers. The sight of a few fine steeds charmed the peer; and, as he descanted on their respective merits, he almost forgot that there was such a person in the world as his wife, nay, even that he was married.

It was half-past four o'clock before Lady Fitzwarren descended from her dressing-room, and so great was the metamorphosis effected in her appearance by her adoption of the latest *modes de Paris*, that she was hardly to be recognised for the same plain and ill-dressed person whose attire had the previous evening excited the derision not only of the proprietors of the hotel, but of their *laquais*. Charmed with her own appearance, her first thought was to visit the best *magasins de modes* in person, in order to select a large supply of caps, hats, turbans, and bonnets, in which, after first figuring in Paris, she should excite general admiration in London. Robes for morning, dinner, and evening parties of the most costly description were ordered; and, before the hour for returning to her hotel had struck, she had expended a sum so large that even the most liberal husband, in the fond delirium of the honeymoon, must have looked grave had he examined the amount of the sum total. To leave her name at the British Embassy, and at the doors of some English acquaintances then domiciled at Paris, was the next step taken, for the countess longed to emancipate herself from the *tête-à-tête* with her lord, and to exhibit the finery she had purchased, in circles where its research and expense should be duly appreciated. She had in the morning, without apprising her lord of the circumstance, ordered a box to be engaged at the Italian Opera; while he, having heard much from his friend, Sir Henry Elwood, of the unrivalled comic powers of an actor then performing at the Porte Saint-Martin, took a box there, and invited his friend to dine with and accompany Lady Fitzwarren and him to that theatre.

The gaiety of the moving scene around him—a gaiety, the influence of which even the most grave of his countrymen are com-

pelled to acknowledge—had produced a salutary effect on the spirits of Lord Fitzwarren. His habitual good nature had triumphed over the annoyances of the preceding days and that morning; and he was ready to overlook the neglect of his comfort so unceremoniously exhibited by his wife, had he but found her the least disposed to atone for it by present kindness or good breeding. She had not returned when he entered the hotel; but the ante-room, filled with handboxes of every possible shape, bore evidence how her time had been occupied since they had last met. He dressed, looked often at the pendule on the chimney-piece, and compared it with his watch, as half hour after half hour wore away, without her making her appearance.

Sir Henry Elwood had arrived at the time named for dinner; and his friend saw, or fancied he saw, as much surprise as dissatisfaction expressed in his countenance when the fact of Lady Fitzwarren not having yet returned home to dress, was revealed. At length she returned, but at an hour that precluded the possibility of their being in time for the piece at the *Porte Saint-Martin*. Her husband met her in the ante-room, told her that he had engaged an old friend to dinner, who was then waiting to be presented to her, and entreated her to be as expeditious as possible in dressing.

“What, my lord,” said she, her face assuming a frown ominous of gathering wrath, “is it possible that you can have committed such a solecism in good breeding as to invite a person to dinner whom I have never seen? This is too glaring a breach of respect towards me; and, to prove my sense of it, I shall not appear at dinner.”

“Not appear at dinner!” reiterated Lord Fitzwarren. “You surely cannot be so unreasonable or unkind towards me! My friend was at the window, and saw you come home; therefore, I cannot say you are ill. Let me entreat you, *Livy*, to be present at dinner. Pray do, and save me from the mortification of letting my friend see how little you value my feelings.”

“Before I accede to your request, Lord Fitzwarren, you must promise me that you will never again engage any person to dine with whom I am not acquainted—nay, more, that you will not invite any one without my permission.”

“I promise,” replied the henpecked husband, ready to make any sacrifice to ensure the presence of his wife at table, and to prevent his friend seeing how ill he and his bride already got on together.

The lady was in no hurry to complete her toilette: and two hours

had nearly elapsed since her commencement of it before she made her appearance in the drawing-room. The time had appeared even double that length to her husband—not from his impatience to behold her, but from the cravings of hunger, and from observing that his friend was suffering from the same cause. He caught Sir Henry Elwood repeatedly looking at the pendule on the mantelpiece, as half hour after half hour rolled away without bringing the lady; and, although the baronet was too well-bred a man to express the annoyance he felt, it was, unconsciously on his part, evident in his countenance.

When Lady Fitzwarren did at last make her entrance, a cold bow and formal courtesy in acknowledgment of the presentation of her husband's friend alone marked her sense of his presence. Not a single word of excuse for her prolonged toilette, and the consequent delay of dinner, escaped her lips, and her whole manner and demeanour impressed Sir Henry, beyond the power of doubt, that he was indeed an unwelcome guest to his hostess.

"I had intended a surprise for you, Livy," said Lord Fitzwarren, as soon as he had rung the bell to order dinner to be served.

"Indeed!" replied the lady. "And may I inquire what it was first; however, informing you that I have a mortal aversion to all surprises?"

Sir Henry Elwood looked abashed, for he felt that his presence at the dinner-table, as a surprise, and by no means an agreeable one, was included in the lady's unequivocal declaration of dislike to all surprises, while Lord Fitzwarren's good-natured face betrayed that he, too, felt the insinuation.

"Oh! the intended surprise was simply my taking a box at the *Porte Saint-Martin*, where I heard the best comic actor of the day was to perform to-night; and I thought you would like to go there, but the performance must have been half over before you were dressed."

"I should not have gone in any case," replied the lady; "for I detest the *Porte Saint-Martin*, and take no pleasure in comic pieces; besides, I had ordered a box to be taken for me at the *Théâtre Italien*."

Her husband bit his lip with vexation at this proof of his wife's total independence of his plans or wishes exhibited before his friend, but he only observed that even for the *Théâtre Italien* he feared they should be too late.

"Not at all," replied Lady Fitzwarren; "nothing is so vulgar as

going early to such places." And, having now bestowed a scrutinizing glance on the baronet, and satisfied herself that his appearance was sufficiently *distingué* to admit of his being seen in her box, she added, "We shall be in time for as much of the opera as I desire to see."

Dinner was served, and, as might be anticipated, from being two hours later than it was ordered for, was not eatable. A spoilt dinner and ill-tempered hostess are not calculated to make that repast pass agreeably. The two gentlemen felt this; and the lady, piqued at discovering by his reserve that she had not made a pleasing impression on her guest, made no effort to keep up conversation. She pronounced the cookery to be abominable, forgetful that her delay had permitted no fair trial to be made of the skill of the artist; and glad were her husband and his guest when, coffee being served, and the carriage announced, the lady retired to put on her shawl, and they sought a consolation for their bad dinners in a glass of liqueur."

"Never marry, Elwood," said Lord Fitzwarren, with a sigh so deep as to convince his friend that the advice came from his heart. "There's no managing women, be assured: they are fifty times more difficult to be kept in order than the most restive horses. You remember Fanny? Ah! I shall never like any creature as I did her!"

CHAPTER LIII.

The high-born oft can vanquish pride,
When sordid views their actions guide,
Unless by principle they're taught
Some favours are too dearly bought,
If paid for at the heavy cost
Of self-respect, for ever lost.

Among the many habits of Mademoiselle Justine, which a moralist, nay, which even a less severe person, might not approve, was one of peeping through keyholes and listening at doors, in order to ascertain what passed when she was excluded from the presence of her mistress. This habit enabled her to form a pretty accurate notion of what occurred, and often furnished her with subjects to amuse her acquaintances, at the expense of her lady and her guests,

She had observed through her peep-hole the slight misunderstanding between her mistress and Lady Wellerby, as well as the signs made by Lord Wellerby to his wife when he wished her to conciliate that lady, and this confirmed the suspicions of the artful *femme de chambre* that the family had some interested designs on the marchioness, which she determined to circumvent by every means in her power. Fearful of any persons acquiring over her mistress an influence that might in the least interfere with her own, Mademoiselle Justine had seen, with alarm and dissatisfaction, the growing intimacy between the Wellerbys and Lady Mountserratt. My lord and lady she suspected of views on the purse of her mistress by card-playing, and Lady Sophia she believed had projects, by flattery, of obtaining presents, to which she, Mademoiselle Justine, thought herself much better entitled.

"Already," said the Frenchwoman to herself, "that cunning old maid has induced *ma bête de maîtresse* to give her von bootifool *séigné, une épingle magnifique*, and a superb ring. Dese gifts are vort tree hundred pound—too much to give away. And did I not hear, ven I was listening at de key-hole, dat *rusée* woman tell *la marquise* dat no grand ladies gave deir rich dresses to deir *femmes de chambre* but only de dresses ordinaire? 'Ah, ha! milady,' said I to my own self, 'you give de conseil to *madame la marquise*, do you, and vant to make her a bad *maîtresse*? Den I will see if I cannot turn her against you, and prevent your getting any more *cadeaux*.' No, no, I moste look after my own interest, and not suffer *la marquise* to be corrupted by dis artful personage."

When Lady Mountserratt retired to her chamber the night that she had lost the wager of fifty pounds, Mademoiselle Justine, while undressing her, ventured to observe that her ladyship looked very ill.

"I tink it is de card-playing dat spoils de complexion of *madame la marquise*; for, before she played, her face vas so fair and de cheeks so pink, for all de vorld like de lilies and de rose."

"I believe there may be some truth in what you say, Justin," replied the marchioness, approaching her face close to the mirror. "Yes; my complexion is certainly very much changed for the worse. The truth is, I don't like cards; they bother me, Justin, and when one is put out of temper one's looks are sure to be affected by it."

"But why, *madame la marquise*, vill you play to please oder people ven you not like it yourself?"

“ Ah, Justin, when ladies are rich and grand they must do many things they don’t like, just to keep in with their own equals.”

“ *Ma foi! madame la marquise*, I tink dat ven ladies are rich and grand, dey ought not to please anybody but demselves. Vat would be de good of riches and grandeur, if you vas obliged to please oders?”

“ Ah! you are thinking of people who are *born* grand, Justin. They, it is true, need think only of pleasing themselves; but you forgot that, though I am now a marchioness, and a rich one into the bargain, I was not born a titled lady, and, therefore, Justin, those who were, are not willin’ to treat me as an equal; so I must, in order to keep company with them, do what they wish.”

“ And let dem vin your money, and behave rudely to you ven dey like! Ah! *madame la marquise*, if I vas in your place, I would act in von very different *manière*. I would only keep de company of dose dat did vat I please, and not dose dat make me do vat *dey* like.”

“ That’s exactly what I’d prefer, Justin, but lords and ladies won’t stand it.”

“ Dat is, *English* lords and ladies won’t; *mais, madame la marquise*, if you would live at Paris—*cher et gai* Paris—you would find plenty of lords and ladies born vid de grand *titres*, who....”

“ What are *titres*, Justin?”

“ De *titres* like de *English* lords and ladies, only moche older.”

“ But I don’t like old people, Justin, even though they may be lords and ladies.”

“ *Mais, madame*, I not mean old people, I mean old *titres*—dat is, lords and ladies, whose great grandfaders, ay, and deir great great grandfaders, for many generations, vere born *ducs, marquis*, and *comtes*.”

“ Oh! yes, now I understand, Justin, old nobility.”

“ *Précisément, madame la marquise, précisément.*”

“ Then the French nobility are not like the *English*—proud and haughty, Justin?”

“ In some dings, *madame*, but not in oders: *par exemple*, dey are very proud of de antiquity of deir families, but dat does not prevent dem from being very polite to dose dat have no grand family at all.”

“ Well, now, that’s what I call sensible, Justin?”

“ Ah, *mon Dieu!* If *madame la marquise* vas to go to Paris—and

dere take von *magnifique* hotel, place von very large somme of money in de hands of her *banquier*, so large dat *he* talk of it to everybody, and den everybody tell it to de whole world at Paris, *madame la marquise* would soon find plenty of grand acquaintance too happy to come to all her *fêtes* and balls. At Paris, money makes everybody *à la mode*, and den, as madame is a *marquise*, '*par-dessus le marché....*'"

"What is '*par-dessus le marché*,' Justin?"

"It do mean into de bargain, madame."

"Yes, yes, I understand. I wish I knew French, Justin, for now everybody speaks it, and I feel so awkward when people use French words, and I don't know what they say."

"If *madame la marquise* vishes, I vill always speak to her in French, and den she vill soon pick up many vords."

"A very good plan, and mind you don't forget it, Justin. But you were saying, that at Paris I should have all the great nobility glad to come to my parties."

"*Certainement*, madame. Dey would breakfast, dine, and sup vid you as often as you please, *pourvu....*"

"What is *pourvu*?"

"Dat is provided."

"Yes, yes; I almost guessed it meant something of that kind."

"*Pourvu* dat you had every thing *en grand* style."

"In grand style; you see how quick I am, Justin, in learning French."

"*Oui, madame la marquise.*"

"I didn't mean *we*, Justin, but *me*."

"Ha! ha! ha! Pardon, *madame la marquise*, I cannot help laughing. Ven I say '*oui*,' I mean '*yes*,' always *yes*!"

"Then what a droll language the French must be to say '*we*,' instead of '*yes*.'"

"But it is no *we*, as madam suppose, but *o-u-i*."

"*O-u-i* spells *we*, does it?"

"Yes, *madame la marquise.*"

"Well, but, Justin, will those French grandees invite me to their houses, in return for my dinners, balls, and *fêtes*?"

"No, madame; de *noblesse française* give no dinners, except to deir intimate friends, no balls, and deir *soirées* are very select, only de *coteries* in vich dey live go to deir *soirées*. All dose persons know each oder vera vell, and meet at each oder's houses in turn

every evening. Dey are quite at deir ease, an' it *en petit comite*, and a foreigner among dem would be *de trop*."

"You don't mean to say that they accept all the hospitalities offered to them by strangers in their own capital, and make no return for them? That is not fair, Justin. Hospitality should be on the principle of give and take; but the French, according to what you tell me, *take*, but do not *give*."

"Dey tink, *malame la marquise*, dat it is quite enough for dem to do de honour to strangers, of accepting deir invitations. Dey go to deir parties elegantly dressed, deir grand names sound vell, and give distinction and fashion to de places to vich dey go; dey smile vera moche—dat is dose dat have de vite teeth to show—make de low reverences to de *maîtresse de la maison*, *critique* all dey see, eat de good tings, talk and laugh vid deir own friends, go away, and smile at de folly of de English and de Americans, who spend so much money to do de honours of Paris to de French."

"And well they may, Justin, for nothing can be more foolish!"

"*Que voulez-vous, madame la marquise?*"

"What's that?"

"Dat means vat would you have? De English and de Americans, vid plenty of money, find dat dey cannot amuse themselves in deir own dull countries; so to please demselves, and *not* to please de French, dey come to Paris, and open deir houses, and try to rival de splendour of the ancient *noblesse* in de grand hotels vonce inhabited by dem before a revolution vich has robbed deir descendants of de means of maintaining deir old grandeur. De *noblesse* at Paris smile and shrug up deir shoulders at de clumsy attempt of dese foreigners to imitate deir ancestors; but, neverdeless, all, except *la noblesse du faubourg Saint-Germain* go to deir *fêtes*, but take especial good care not to invite dem, in return, to deir *soirées*."

"Then I think the French very shabby for this conduct, Justin: they ought not to accept hospitalities which they will not return."

"Ah! madame, it is so like de habitants of a country *commerçant*, to expect dinner for dinner, ball for ball."

"And why not, pray?"

This question was asked in so angry a tone, and with such a heightened colour in the face of the marchioness, that the cunning *femme de chambre* dared not hazard the impertinent rejoinder that rose to her lips. She, therefore, merely said, "*Madame la mar-*

quise must remember dat de French *noblesse* lost all deir grande fortunes by de terrible revolution ven *peurre Louis Seize* and Marie Antoinette vere beheaded, and derefore have not de money to return de dinners and *fêtes* given to dem by de English and Americans."

"Oh! that's a different thing, Justin. If they haven't the means, they can't help it; but I know that, if I were in their places, I would not accept hospitalities for which I could make no return."

"Ah! *Madame la marquise* has de notions of a *princesse*, and in Paris, madame would be adored. Dere madame would not be asked to play at cards if she not wish it, and all de French ladies would be so polite to her—not like dat ugly cross Lady Vellerby, dat looks at *madame la marquise* as if madame vas nobody, and she vas a queen. I cannot bear to see it, it do make me quite vex."

"And how could you see it, even if such a thing had occurred?" demanded the marchioness.

Mademoiselle Justine felt that she had committed herself, but adroitly got out of the scrape by saying, "Oh! I hear it, madame, from de *courrier* and from de *valet de chambre* of Lord Vellerby. Dey are quite shocke to see de rudeness of dat ugly voman to *madame la marquise*."

"She *was* very impudent this evening," said the marchioness, after a pause of some minutes, her cheeks becoming crimson at the recollection, "and I had a great mind to refuse shaking hands with her, that is the truth of the matter."

"And madame would have been quite right, for it is too bad dat Milady Vellerby, who is but a *comtesse*, and has not von half de money dat *madame la marquise* has, should be so impertinent to her superiors."

"But I had the best of the business, I can tell you, Justin, for I gave her as good as she brought, and, what's more, insisted on her drinking a bumper of wine, in spite of her declaring that she never drinks plain wine."

"Ah! *la grande pénitence de boire un verre de bon vin*."

"What is that?"

"*Madame la marquise* is vera good to believe dat it vas a *pénitence* to dat ugly voman to drink a glass of good vine. She too glad to get it, but pretends not to like it before company, just to make de people tink dat she is more genteel dan *madame la mar*

quise. Many of de *femmes de chambre* of de ladies do tell me dat deir *maîtresses*, who vill not taste vine before company, drink it ven dere is nobody by, and den pretend to be shoocke at dose ladies, like *madame la marquise*, who drink deir vine before all de world, vidout making de grimace about it? Vy should not a lady drink vine if she likes it?"

"Ay, why not, indeed? I have no patience with such mock modesty. I have a great mind to go to Paris. Justin, that's what I have, for that is so near London that I could get over turtle and venison, and anything else I fancied, for, to tell you the fact, I am sick to death of the kickshaws they give me to eat here."

Justine, having seen her mistress placed in her bed, retired for the night, leaving that lady to indulge in the disagreeable reflections occasioned by a retrospection of the rudeness of Lady Wellerby, and the money she had lost at cards, increased tenfold by the consequences of repletion, which, acting on her excited system, produced all the horrors of dyspepsia.

"There, I have lost sixty pounds to-night," thought the marchioness. "Sixty pounds! What a fortune I should once have thought half, ay, even a quarter, of that sum! How strange it is that people's minds can change so soon with their circumstances! Thousands appear to me now as shillings used to do, and I seem as accustomed to the possession of great wealth as if I had been used to it all my born days. Ah, how mistaken people are when they fancy, as I used to do once, that a great fortune can make one perfectly happy! All mine can't procure me such sleep as I used to have, when, after a severe day's work, I had scarcely laid my head on my hard bolster before I was asleep. I used to think, when I had to get up at the break of day, how happy the rich must be who could lie on their downy beds as long as they liked; but now that no one has a softer bed than mine, I can get no rest on it, and, as I lie, turning and twisting until I feel in a fever, I look back to the days of hard labour and nights of refreshing slumber with something like regret.

"Heighho! I dare say that at this moment every soul in the old home is fast asleep, ay, and enjoying pleasant dreams, as I used to have. I wonder, do they ever think of me. How surprised they'd be to see my grandeur! They'd think I must be the happiest woman in the whole world; but they don't know how soon one gets so used to grandeur that it fails to please as at first it did, and that all the money in the world can't buy sleep. *They* don't know what

a chilling thing it is to have no one to love one or care about one, except those who have some object to gain, and that, if one's money was gone, all those who flock around the rich would soon go, too. Ah! yes; the poor can count on the affection of their friends. *They* have no interested motives; *they* comfort and console each other when sorrow comes, and share each other's joys. How every poor neighbour in dear old Ireland flocks to the house of mourning, to condole with those who have lost one of their family! How every one brings whatever can be spared—and often what can be but ill spared—to help some poor neighbour in distress! And what comforting words and what friendly shakes of the hand are given! Ah! yes; if there's more grandeur with the rich, there's more love and kindness among the poor; and I almost wish I had never left home or become a grand lady, for I am not happy. I wonder whether the stream where I used to rinse out the linen after I had washed it still flows on over the bright sand and shining pebbles with as pleasant a sound as it used to do. Ah! though I've seen many a fine river since, I have never seen such a beautiful stream as that! It is strange how often it comes into my head. If I shut my eyes, I can see the trees bending over it, as if it was a looking-glass in which they were admiring themselves, and one large stone near the bank, over which the water gushed so brightly, breaking into large pearls. I had never seen or heard of a pearl then, but now my large pearls always remind me of that spot. How joyfully I used to sing as I beetled my linen on the flat top of that same stone, with the birds singing over my head, the blue heavens smiling, and the fresh breath of the morning playing with my hair and cooling my forehead, better than any of the fine faws which have cost me so much money could! Often and often, when I can't get a wink of sleep, I think of that stream until I fancy I hear the sound of it, and I at length drop into a slumber."

Whether the memory of the stream in her native land produced the same salutary effect on the marchioness on the present occasion, we are not furnished with any clue to ascertain; but when Mademoiselle Justine answered the summons of her bell at a late hour the next day, she found her mistress pensive and indisposed, and there was a visible irritation in her manner, as she announced that it would be necessary to order dinner for six persons.

"*Comment, madame la marquise!*" exclaimed the *femme de chambre*, with ill-disguised dissatisfaction.

"Common!" reiterated the marchioness. "By no means com-

men. What could put it into your head, Justin, that I would engage common persons to dinner?"

"Madame not understand von vord I say. I not mean common persons, I only say *comment*, which means *how*?"

"I have invited the Wellerbys to dine here, not only to-day, but every day while I remain at Naples. I now wish I had not, for the very thought of having them bores me; but I don't know how it is. Justin, I very often do things at night that I repent of next morning!"

"Ah! yes, yes," thought Mademoiselle Justine, taking care, however, not to express her thoughts, "I suppose you do. Dat is ven you do drink too much vine, vich happens every evening of your life.—No vonder *madame la marquise* is bored at de very tought: but vat vill it be, ven, day after day, dose disagreeable persons vill be coming to dinner and opening deir eyes vid impertinent looks of vonder at every ting *madame la marquise* eats, and vid horror at every glass of vine madame drinks?"

"And do they do this, Justin? I never noticed it; but then, as I always eat and drink without watching other people, they may have been guilty of this impertinence without my observing it."

"Ah! madame, I swear to you 'tis true. De *courrier* and all de oder servants have seen it, and dey are so mad at such ingratitude for all your kindness dat dey hate de Wellerbys, and say dey only come to vin your money, and save paying for deir dinners at home!"

"I wish I had not asked them, but now it can't be helped."

"Yes, madame, it *can* be helped, for you can leave Naples and go to Paris, and den you vill be rid of dem!"

"Very true, Justin. An excellent plan, and I will certainly carry it into execution, so let all my things be got ready for a start. But go now and tell the *currier* to order a good dinner, the best that can be had. I gave the Wellerbys leave to ask any friends they liked to come, so let the dinner be commanded for six."

"Ah! *madame la marquise* is moche too good, moche too good, and dese people impose on her good nature," said Mademoiselle Justine, turning up her eyes, and leaving the room to fulfil the instructions of her mistress.

The marchioness was seated at a luxurious luncheon, to which she was doing ample honour, while reproaching her *dame de compagnie*, poor Mrs. Bernard, for having so little appetite—a reproach

always made whenever they were *tête à tête* at any repast, and not uttered in kindness but in contempt, as if a want of appetite was a sin of deep dye in her eyes, when Lady Sophia Wellerby was announced.

"Papa and mamma are gone out for a drive," said that lady, "and I excused myself from accompanying them on the plea of a nervous headache, which I in truth have, and also from a desire to come and enjoy the pleasure of your society, my dear friend, for a little while. How well you are looking to-day!"

"Do sit down and have some luncheon."

"I am half tempted to accept your offer," replied Lady Sophia, her appetite excited by the savory odour of the rich *plats* on the table, which formed a striking contrast to the meagre fare contracted for by her lady-mother, the quality and paucity of which rendered the repast served to the Wellerby family anything but luxurious.

"What are you about, Mrs. Bernard? Why don't you jump up and ring the bell to have a napkin and cover laid for Lady Sophia?"

The new guest sat down, helped herself to what she preferred, and evinced so good an appetite that her hostess, highly pleased to be kept so well in countenance, exclaimed, "Ah! now this is what I call pleasant. It does me good, and sharpens my desire to eat when I have some one with me who enjoys a meal, instead of looking at Mrs. Bernard putting morsels into her mouth as small as if they were for a bird, and sipping a glass of cold water. Drink a glass of prime old sherry, Lady Sophia. 'Twill do you a world of good."

"Well, for once I should like to venture, if I were sure it would not get into my head;" and the lady held her glass to be filled.

"Pour out a bumper," said the marchioness; "and, as to getting into your head, there is not the slightest danger. Look at me; you see wine never gets into *my* head. Here's to your good health, Lady Sophia; you can't do less than pledge me, so drink your wine up at once, and don't let it get flat in your glass."

The lady did as she was told, with a docility that quite captivated the marchioness—nay, was persuaded, with a little violence, to venture on a second glass of the old sherry, her hostess having emptied no less than four: when both retired to the drawing-room, to enjoy a *tête-à-tête*.

"Ah! my charming friend," said Lady Sophia, taking the hand

of Lady Mountserratt : " how truly do I appreciate the happiness of our stolen interviews ! "

" And a good luncheon, be assured, takes nothing from their comfort. I can't bear the way in which your mother goes on—refusing to drink wine, and, I suppose, making you follow her example. I dare say, if the truth were known, it would be found that it's out of economy she does it, and, be assured, wine would do you a great deal of good."

" Judging from the new sensations I experience, the unusual warmth of my frame, and the elevation of my spirits, I should be tempted to agree with you in opinion, my sweet friend : but my mother would oppose any change in my *régime*. The truth is, my dear marchioness, mine is not a happy home," and the lady sighed deeply, and shook her head.

" I thought as much," was the reply ; " Lady Wellerby seems to me to be a bit of a Tartar, and to want to have everything her own way."

" Alas ! you have but too well divined the truth. Could you but know the miserable life I lead, you would indeed pity me."

" Poor soul ! and so I do, without knowing any particulars. To be denied the pleasures of the table is enough to make any one miserable. I'm sure *I* couldn't stand it."

" If that were all, my sweet friend, disagreeable as it is, I should bear it without murmuring, for I have been brought up such a stranger to luxuries that I don't miss them ; but to have no companionship, to be worse dressed than any other girl in society, and never to have any pocket-money to buy the least thing that strikes my fancy, or to bestow relief on a poor object,—ah ! these, my charming friend, are severe trials when one has arrived at my age. I am kept in trammels precisely as if I were a girl just out of the nursery."

" Indeed, yours is a hard case, Lady Sophia. And so you have no pocket-money, poor soul ? "

" Not a *sou*," and Lady Sophia looked as piteously as she could.

" Well, you shan't be without money, my dear girl, for I'll give you a hundred pounds, that I will."

" Dear Lady Mountserratt, how good, how kind you are ! But, really, I am shocked lest you should think that I revealed my position to you with the slightest intention of appealing to your generosity ! "

“And where would be the crime if you did? Indeed, for my part, I never could understand why any one would take the trouble of telling his or her distress to another unless with the view of being relieved.”

Lady Sophia's face grew red at this coarse observation; for, mean-spirited and grasping as she was, she felt shocked at the unsophisticated simplicity and truth of the remark made by the vulgar woman to whom she was about to lay herself under an obligation, and, although not ashamed to elicit her generosity by a false statement, her pride revolted at the notion of being found out by one whom she considered so infinitely beneath her in good sense.

“What makes you so red? You are not, I hope, affronted at what I said. I am a plain-spoken person, and like to come to the point at once, without beating about the bush. I asked you no questions, but you told me your situation, and a very disagreeable one it is, I must say. I took the hint, and offered you, with right good will, a hundred pounds. That may seem a great sum to *you*, who have never had any money, but to *me* it is nothing at all, so don't make any ceremony about accepting it. Mind, I *give*, and don't lend, for I make it a point never to lend money to any one, and I'll tell you the reason: — If I lent, I should expect to be paid, and I've always heard that borrowers, somehow or another, have a great objection to paying; nay, feel more offended when asked to pay than if the loan had been refused them. I'd get angry at finding myself taken in, or put to trouble to get back my money; so, to save all that botheration, I never lend. Therefore, the hundred shall be a free gift to you.”

“I don't think it would be right for me to accept so large a present,” observed Lady Sophia, assuming an air of modesty and ingenuousness.

“Stuff, nonsense, my dear! What's the difference between money and money's worth, I should like to know? Why, the brooch I gave you the other day cost me one hundred and fifty guineas—the pin and ring as much more—yet you made no great objections about taking them. But you grand folk have such strange notions that you sometimes puzzle me. There now, hand me that box, and write out a cheque for me; I hate drawing cheques myself, and I'll sign it for you.”

“Pray, don't; I should have no power of getting the money for it, without its coming to the knowledge of my mother, who would never pardon me.”

“Well, now, that’s a good joke. *She* was glad enough to win fifty pounds from me last night—no, fifty *guineas*, I should say—and reminded me no less than twice over of it, for fear I should forget to pay her; yet she would be angry, you say, at your taking a present of a hundred pounds—your mother would say guineas—freely given!”

Lady Sophia felt that it would be useless to attempt to enlighten the obtuse Irishwoman, on the distinctions made in pecuniary matters by persons of her class, so said nothing; and the marchioness, satisfied that she had convinced her companion of the folly of such puerile distinctions, said—“Well, I’ll send my *currier* to the bank for the money, and you shall receive it from my own hands, and nobody will be a bit the wiser.”

“A thousand thanks, my charming friend. You really overpower me by your kindness. How shall I ever prove to you how deeply I feel it?”

“By just behaving always in the same good-natured manner you do at present, and not acting as I am told most, if not all, fine ladies do—all friendship one day, and all coldness the next.”

“If you could read my heart, my dearest friend, you would there see written, in ineffaceable characters, the impression your generosity and friendship have made there.”

“Faith and troth! I’m but a poor hand at reading, even in a plain printed book,” said the marchioness, thrown off her guard by the exhilaration produced by four glasses of the prime old sherry, “and as for reading hearts, that’s beyond me—but isn’t that a carriage I hear stopping at the door?”

“Yes, yes!” exclaimed Lady Sophia. “It is my mother’s carriage, and I must fly. Adieu, my sweet friend, adieu!”

“Mind you come to luncheon to-morrow, and I’ll have the money ready for you,” replied Lady Mountserratt, as Lady Sophia hurried from the room, and by a back staircase gained her chamber before her mother could reach her own *salon*.

“Well, I’ve sent her away a happy girl,” thought the marchioness, when left alone. “Poor thing! to think of her never having had any money to call her own. How well I remember my joy and happiness the first money I got, and how I lay awake all night thinking what I’d buy with it? How little poor people know about lords and ladies! They think—and so used I to think, too—that they have always their purses filled with gold; and that hundreds—ay, by my faith, and thousands, too—are no more to

them than halfpence, or even farthings, are to the hard-working poor. But how different is this from the fact! Here's an earl and a countess, with only one daughter to provide for, and they leave the poor girl without so much as a guinea in her pocket; and as for her dress, why she wears only poor, thin, mean silks, that never, I am sure, cost more than two shillings a yard, and has not many even of these same. How affronted Justin would be if any one offered her such dresses! I'd pity poor lords and ladies, if they were not so proud."

CHAPTER LIV.

Fortune, thou fickle goddess! men by thee
 Are taught the uses of adversity;
 Thou art of worldly friendships the true test,
 For as thy smiles with virtues can invest
 Those who possess them not, so can thy frown,
 Of good men's deeds the recollection drown.
 And when thou fliest, fame and false friends too,
 Will quickly leave him whom thou didst undo
 To learn the lesson, often taught too late,
 That only on thy minions do they wait.

In the midst of his own pecuniary annoyances—and such annoyances are, perhaps, among the most humiliating and painful of any to a proud mind—Strathern felt glad that his friend, Lord Delmington, would no longer have occasion for his aid, and reflected with satisfaction that he had been able to assist him when his services were most required.

There are few circumstances in life on which a generous man reflects with so much complacency as on acts of friendship conferred on the deserving. This soothes him even when fortune denies him the power of continuing such acts of kindness; and he knows that, though the fickle crowd who bask in the sunshine of fortune may forsake him, the friends he succoured will fondly cling to him still. On Lord Delmington and Olliphant, he felt he could count; they were not like the herd he had lately encountered, and doubtless many more such hearts might be found had he been wiser in the selection of his friends.

The experience for which men pay dearly is always more valued than that offered to them gratis by others. There is no sense of humiliation in listening to the dictates of wisdom purchased at the

cost of some suffering—nay, a man's self-love is in some degree gratified by the consciousness that he is capable of discovering his own errors, even though, as in general it unhappily occurs, the discovery comes somewhat too late. Causes are too frequently not looked into until their effects are felt; but the truth of the homely proverb, "a burned child dreads the fire," is exemplified every day in the self-correction produced by the grave results of former follies.

As Strathern looked seriously into his own past conduct, and analyzed it with as much impartiality as he would have done that of a stranger, how much did he see to condemn in time mispent, duties neglected, and an unchecked indulgence in his own pleasures! Luckily for him, the natural refinement of his mind had kept him free from the coarse vices which stain so many of his contemporaries, and the innate goodness of his heart had prevented his wilfully giving pain to others. But reflection whispered that, although he had done little harm, he had also done little good, and that, blessed with means to effect an amelioration in the fate of hundreds whom it was his positive duty to assist, he had wasted an immense portion of his large fortune in recklessly consulting only his own taste, careless of the price required to carry his wishes into effect. His thoughtlessness in yielding an assent to the demands of Lord Francis Musgrove and various other of his unprincipled associates, now that the consequence of his folly was fully exposed to him, was viewed in a very different light to that in which he had previously regarded it. Every reflection on the past was fraught with humility at his own want of good sense and discretion, and strong and unchangeable was the resolution he formed, that henceforth the fortune confided to him should be appropriated to better purposes than the mere gratification of his own selfish pleasures, or to the support of those of his spendthrift acquaintances. He would devote his time to bettering the condition of the labouring classes, to extending the blessings of education, and to relieving the wants of the distressed. No longer supinely abandoning himself to the disappointment of the heart to which he had hitherto yielded without resistance, he would seek, in the discharge of his duties, an oblivion of care, and merit, even though he might not be so fortunate as to attain it, the approbation of her whose image still reigned triumphant in his heart. "If I cannot be happy myself," thought Strathern, "let me at least endeavour to render others so;" and this generous determination sent a glow of satisfaction through

his heart, that he accepted as a foretaste of the consolation that awaited him when, released from the pecuniary annoyances that at present pressed upon him, he should be free to devote himself to carrying out the munificent projects that he had formed, and should witness their gratifying results.

Strathern lost no time in lodging the sum repaid him by Mr. Vincent in the hands of his banker, and having drawn cheques to settle the small accounts of the different tradespeople, whose pressing demands for payment, ever since the report of his embarrassments had been made public, had only been equalled by their desire to have his name entered on their books previously, he felt more at ease than he had lately done.

The next day's post brought him no less than six or seven letters from college friends, who, having heard of his pecuniary difficulties, wrote to offer their aid, either by the advance of loans or by giving security for him. The warmth and kindness with which these offers were made, and by men, too, with whom he had held little or no intercourse since he left college, were very gratifying to his feelings, and soothed him under the annoying proofs they afforded of the publicity of his reported ruin. The characters, likewise, of those who thus unsolicited proffered their services, rendered his sense of them still more satisfactory; for, distinguished in both houses of parliament, no less for the talent they displayed there than for the pure patriotism which formed the basis and guide of their actions, they were looked on as among the most prominent of those on whom the eyes of the nation were fixed with hope for the achievement of much future good to be effected by their unwearied exertions, as well as with much gratitude for past ones.

"*They*," thought Strathern, as he mused over the contents of their letters, "have been passing their time more profitably for their country, and more honourably for themselves, than I have done. I feel that I do not merit the interest that these my former friends still take in my welfare, so promptly shown by the generosity with which they act towards me. But it is not yet too late to redeem lost time; and, fired by their example, I will join the patriot band, and defend the interests they have so nobly espoused."

Strathern wrote to these friends warmly and gratefully, as he felt; explained to them that his difficulties were but of a temporary nature; and expressed his desire, when he had finally arranged them, of entering parliament, and of making one of a party with whose political opinions his own so entirely coincided. A new

and useful career seemed to open to him a road to distinction, in which any talent he might possess would not only be used with credit to himself, but with advantage to his country, and he mentally pledged himself that henceforth his should be no idle life, and that he would render himself worthy of being named with those whose noble and disinterested conduct he longed to emulate.

Cheered by hopes for the future, Strathern cast from him the despondency that had lately clung to him; and although the fair Louisa Sydney was not less fondly beloved than before, she was remembered with less painful emotions, because he was determined to render himself more worthy of her esteem. His good resolutions were strengthened, and his spirits cheered, when, a few days after, some of the friends who had written to offer their aid in the belief that he required it, arrived in town, and sought him out. He listened with a glowing heart to their generous sympathy for the wants of the people, and their philanthropical plans for bettering their condition. It was a pleasant sight to behold these fine young men, some of whom were the scions of the noblest and proudest families of England, forgetful of self-interest, and resisting the temptations of pleasure that courted them on every side, in order to devote themselves to the good work in which they were so earnestly engaged.

How empty, how puerile, appeared now to Strathern the objects that had hitherto occupied his attention! While he had been intent on expending thousands in the purchase of statues at Rome, his college friends had been devoting all their time and thoughts to a nobler purpose, that of rendering men enlightened and worthy of the advantages they were determined to obtain for them by advocating their interests and defending their rights. With what pleasure did Strathern turn to such men, after having experienced the heartlessness of the idle voluptuaries whose society he had found so irksome, even before he had discovered their utter worthlessness! The friends with whom he now found himself associated had made a vast progress in useful knowledge and general information since he had parted from them, brief as that period had been. They had been incited to seek instruction by the desire of better fulfilling the grave and noble task they had undertaken, and had applied themselves so diligently to their self-imposed studies that Strathern felt that he, too, must be active, in order to overtake them and be able to fulfil his part in the good work in which they were engaged. How different were these men to the

Mountiserrats, Musgroves, and Crawleys of the day, and how did he glory in their friendship!

There is no better plan for securing a relief from one's own personal cares than in taking an interest in those of others. The instances of privation and misery brought before Strathern by the noble-minded friends with whom he now spent the greater portion of his time, made so deep an impression on his heart, that it ceased to be wholly engrossed as hitherto by the passion that enervated it; and his own difficulties appeared puerile, when compared with those of men whose daily toil could hardly furnish a scanty meal to their poor families. How little had he hitherto reflected on the hard fate of such men, how little had he done to ameliorate their condition, or to relieve their wants? How many men like Strathern, with fine natures and kind dispositions, requiring only the stimulus of example and association with kindred minds, remain long inert, and blind, as it were, to the misery around them, and the duties which their positions entail, until, touched by the chastening spirit of philanthropy exhibited by others, their breasts own a generous sympathy, and they join in the good work!

Never did miser regret a lost treasure more than did Strathern the vast sums he had hitherto lavished, when he beheld the good he might have effected with even one quarter of the wealth so recklessly expended. "Ah! were I again rich," thought he, "how differently would I act! But, though I have so materially impaired my fortune, ample means still remain for doing good, and my own selfish pleasures, and not the claims of the poor, shall be curtailed in consequence of my former follies."

Walking in St. James's Street a few days after these reflections, Strathern was accosted by his old acquaintance, Mr. Crawley. He had seen this gentleman approach, but, aware of his worldliness, as well as of his unceremoniousness in evincing it, he was passing without bowing to him, when, with an unblushing effrontery, Crawley extended his hand, seized that of Strathern, and pressing it warmly, addressed him in the most cordial terms.

"Why, my dear fellow, have you avoided us all of late, and why have you not been to our club?" demanded he, while Strathern, astonished at this unexpected civility, was wholly at a loss how to account for it. "You are wrong," resumed Crawley, "to keep aloof in this manner from your old friends—you are, indeed, my dear fellow! There is nothing like sticking by old friends—'pon my soul, there is not!"

“ But are old friends always disposed to adhere to this rule? I fancy not, Crawley; indeed, I know that some are not, and, to be candid with you, I thought——’s Club the very last place where a man who was arrested in front of its windows, a short time ago, was likely to meet with a cordial reception, and, judging by the conduct of some of its members, from whom I fancied I had a right to expect better treatment, I formed rather an unfavourable opinion of the whole.”

“ You had some reason, I must confess, but I hope we are not *all* so callous as those to whom you allude. Be assured, my dear Strathern, you have some friends, and I may truly add I am among the number, whom no change of fortune could alienate from you.”

Strathern was really touched by this unexpected kindness of manner in a man so universally considered the most selfish among his *clique*, and he returned the pressure of his hand with more warmth than he had ever previously done in his life, when, having reached——’s Club, and declined the pressing request of his companion to enter it, he bade him farewell.

As he turned from Mr. Crawley, he was accosted by Mr. Rhymer, who, after the first salutation, remarked, in his usual cynical tone, “ Had I not heard of your good fortune, I should have surmised that some very favourable turn of the wheel of the blind goddess had enriched you, merely from seeing the demonstrations of friendship towards you evinced by Mr. Crawley, who never yet was known to bestow even a shake of the hand on one on whom the fickle deity frowned.”

“ I am perfectly ignorant of any peculiar good fortune,” replied Strathern. “ Pray enlighten me.”

“ Is it possible that you, whom it the most nearly concerns, have not heard the news which reached London two hours ago through Sir Edward Topham, who was almost a witness to the catastrophe?”

“ I really have heard no news, and have seen no one to-day, except Crawley and yourself, so I cannot possibly guess to what catastrophe you refer.”

“ The deaths of Lord Argentyng and his three sons, all of whom were drowned by the upsetting of his boat in the heavy gale of wind last evening, as they were leaving his yacht at the back of the Isle of Wight to go on shore.”

Good heavens! how shocking!” exclaimed Strathern, forget-

ting, in the pity excited by the sad fate of Lord Argentyn and his sons, how greatly he should be a gainer by the event.

Mr. Rhymer looked at him with more complacency than his saturnine countenance was wont to assume. "You are a singular person," said he, "and receive the news of your accession to forty thousand a-year with more philosophy than I imagined any man, and least of all a ruined man, as you have been represented to be, could exhibit in similar circumstances."

"Did you expect me to rejoice at the deaths of four individuals in whose existence the happiness of many may be bound up?" asked Strathern, angrily.

"I only expected you to feel as nine-tenths of my acquaintances would on a like occasion; for few, very few are those who could for a moment reflect on the means that produced so desirable an end as the coming into forty thousand a-year, and all the *agréments* attached to it. Already have you experienced one of the advantages of this event; Mr. Crawley, the worldly-wise Mr. Crawley, who was never known to smile on one on whom fortune frowned, has sought you, has pressed your hand, and put on his most friendly countenance to greet you. I anticipated this when I saw him two hours ago, listening to the account of the catastrophe at the Isle of Wight, and heard him inquiring how many thousands a-year the inheritance would bring you. I must also do the rest of your *ci-devant* friends the justice to say that they seem disposed to treat you henceforth with equal kindness. Even the Marquis of Mountserratt declared you were not, after all, so bad a fellow as some asserted. Lord Francis Musgrove said he would call on you to-day, and I add that he will probably do you the honour of borrowing a thousand or two from you; in short, at this moment, I know of no man who stands in higher estimation at——'s Club than you do, and for this change in the feelings of its members you may thank the gale of last evening, which verifies the truth of the old adage that 'it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.'"

Although Strathern was only very slightly acquainted with the late Lord Argentyn, the news of his death and that of his three sons produced so great a shock in his mind that he felt unfit for society that day, and returned to his hotel, where he gave strict orders to be denied to all visitors. He felt a blush of indignation mount to his cheek, when, two hours after, the waiter at the Clarendon presented him with about fifty cards which had been left during his absence. Among them were those of the Marquis of Mountserratt and Lord

Francis Musgrove, with a note from the latter, containing a most pressing invitation to dinner.

Never was Strathern more deeply impressed with a conviction of the heartlessness and falseness of what is termed fashionable society than at that moment, and the contempt it excited in his mind almost banished from it the recollection of the cause which had again drawn around him those summer friends, who had fled when they thought he might require their assistance, but who now returned when fortune again showered her favours on him. The bandage which had concealed from him the selfishness and duplicity of his former associates had dropped from his eyes, never more to be resumed, and he felt a wiser—ay, and a better man; for his experience of their heartlessness did not dispose him to misanthropy; it only rendered him aware of his own error in having lived with such men, when, as he felt persuaded, so many good and estimable ones were to be found elsewhere.

“Henceforth,” said Strathern, “I will forsake the flowery path where thorns lie hid while the summer lasts, but where, no sooner do the flowers begin to perish at the first rude blast of winter, than the thorns take their place, to wound those who would seek to cull one stray flower from among them.”

Then his thoughts reverted to her from whom they were seldom absent—to Louisa Sydney. Were she to share his good fortune, and to help him to dispense it nobly and wisely for the good of others, so as to call down a blessing on them both, how different would be his fate! But what availed it to think of her. She never more would be aught to him. Had she not rejected him when he was believed to be rich, broken her solemn engagement to share his destiny, and when forgetful of the ill treatment he had experienced at her hands, had she not, when reduced to poverty, scornfully refused the hand once more offered for her acceptance? No, it was folly, madness, to think of her, and yet of this folly he was every hour guilty. He almost despised himself for it, and determined, as he had done a hundred times before, to banish her from his thoughts: but when an object has once taken possession of the heart, it is in vain to try to drive it from its resting-place: there it will reign, in spite of every effort to chase it, proving that love, like other dangerous maladies, can resist the volition of him whom it makes its victim.

Strathern's reflections were interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Papworth, who would take no denial from the porter, who had

orders to admit no one. "I forced admittance, sir," said he. "and I hope the occasion will excuse the liberty. You have not, I conclude, heard the news," a conclusion which the grave, if not sad countenance of Strathern led him to form.

"If you refer to the melancholy deaths of Lord Argentyn and his sons, I am aware of that sad event."

"Yes, sir, I *did* refer to it. I only heard the news half an hour ago, and I instantly hurried off to apprise you of it."

Strathern acknowledged the attention only by a bow; and the gravity of his aspect, so different to what he had expected, checked the congratulations that rose to the lips of Mr. Papworth on his accession to fortune.

"You were not related to the late Lord Argentyn, I believe, sir," observed the man of law.

"No," replied Strathern, "and I had only a very slight acquaintance with him."

Emboldened by this avowal, Mr. Papworth took courage to add, "You are now, sir, the possessor of one of the best paid rent-rolls in England: a clear forty-five thousand a year, with two of the noblest seats I know. The mansion of the former earl, in which you passed so many of your boyish days, with all its valuable collection of pictures and statues, and unique library, are now yours."

He paused, expecting to see a change in the countenance of his client at the recapitulation of his good fortune, but he was disappointed, for Strathern continued to look as grave as before.

"It is a pity, sir," resumed he, "that you ever embarked in building, seeing that you have now inherited so fine a mansion in town. Had my advice been asked, that step would not have been taken."

This remark aroused Strathern's spleen, and, turning with more animation than he had hitherto displayed, he said, while something like a smile played around his lips, "I was not aware that your prescience, great as I am willing to believe it, went so far as to anticipate that I should inherit the mansion of Lord Argentyn, and consequently not require to erect one."

"No, sir: I did *not* look forward to such an event as within the bounds of probability, for, with three sons, all healthy, fine youths, I thought the succession was secured in the Argentyn family; but what I meant to imply was, that, had I been consulted, I should have

had a regular contract made with the builder, and so saved you a vast sum."

"You will, of course, now stop all proceedings in effecting the loan we had contemplated, and also not think of selling out of the funds."

"Certainly, sir—certainly. There was something curious about that loan that I have not been able to make out. It was literally offered to me for you, and to an unlimited amount, by a solicitor of my acquaintance. Nay, so desirous was he to accommodate you, that he said any portion of it could be advanced, if necessary, previously to the deeds being drawn up—an offer, I believe I may say, unprecedented, and the more remarkable on the part of so cautious and steady a lawyer as Mr. Wandsworth."

"Mr. Wandsworth!" exclaimed Strathern; "why did you not tell me before that the loan was offered by him?"

"Because he told me that he particularly wished that his name should not be mentioned in the business; that he had a great objection to its appearing in the transaction; and I respected his whim, for so I considered it, and would not have named him, had it not slipped out thoughtlessly just now."

The truth instantly flashed on the mind of Strathern, and warm was the glow of feeling it produced in his heart. He guessed that in the proffered loan Mr. Wandsworth was but the agent of Mrs. Sydney or her daughter. None but friends truly interested in his welfare would have offered to advance an unlimited sum of money even before the legal papers could be drawn up or signed. Yes, it was plain that this generous and delicate mode of serving him could only proceed from a woman. He was therefore still thought of, still esteemed, by the only two of the sex whom he loved, and their first use of the wealth they had both so lately inherited was to succour him from the effects of his own imprudence! A thousand fond thoughts and hopes sprang up in his breast at this proof of their continued interest in him; and Mr. Papworth, as he marked the change in his countenance from sadness to animation, very justly concluded that money had no part in the feeling that had produced it. "He is a strange mortal," thought that sapient gentleman, "and never will, I fear, learn the value of money. He bears unmoved that he is the possessor of immense wealth, and this, too, when through his own folly he was in positive want of money; yet he brightens up the moment that he learns that Mr. Wandsworth was the person who offered the loan. There must be something more

than meets the eye in all this, and when I see Wandsworth I must try if I cannot discover it."

"You are aware of the sudden death of the Marquis of Roehampton?" observed Strathern.

"Yes, sir. One of the partners of the late marquis's solicitors, who are friends of mine, set off for Italy, the moment he learned the event, in order to convey the tidings to the present marquis, whose delicate state of health induced them to prefer this mode of breaking the sad news to him to conveying it by letter. Mr. Warton was to travel night and day until he reached the marquis."

A letter at that moment was handed to Strathern, and his cheek glowed as he perused it. It came from Mr. Vincent, and stated, with many humble apologies for the liberty he was taking, that, having by accident learned that Mr. Strathern was under some temporary difficulties at the moment, he begged to inform him that he was ready to advance fifty or a hundred thousand pounds without a day's delay, and that, if that sum was not sufficient, another fifty thousand would be forthcoming.

"You see, Mr. Papworth," said Strathern, handing him the letter, "I have some true friends."

"Vincent," observed Mr. Papworth—"ay, a very rich man. I did not know that you were acquainted with him. A very liberal offer. But perhaps he heard the change in your fortune. It is by this time generally known."

"He could not have heard it at Bath, whence you will see, by the postmark, he wrote; and the letter was written yesterday, some hours before the occurrence of the fatal event that has enriched me," replied Strathern, reproachfully.

"Yes, yes, so I now see," observed Mr. Papworth, examining the date and postmark of the letter. "Really, Mr. Vincent's offer is a very handsome one."

Mr. Papworth rose to take his leave, saying that he should hold himself in readiness to start for either of Lord Argentyn's seats at the shortest notice, and send two of his clerks to see to the inventories.

"There must be no hurry in this affair," said Strathern. "Let nothing be done until after due time has elapsed for the finding of the bodies, and rendering the last sad offices to the dead. The late lord was, I believe, a widower. I think I remember reading the death of Lady Argentyn in the newspapers a year ago. Has she left any daughters?"

“No, sir; the only issue were the three youths who perished with their father.”

When he found himself alone, again and again did Strathern advert to the loan offered by Mr. Wandsworth, and each time with increased satisfaction. The hopes it awakened changed the sadness which the deaths of Lord Argentyn and his sons had awakened in his mind; and, although such an acknowledgment may stamp him as unwise and unworldly, it may with truth be asserted that the vast fortune he had so unexpectedly inherited afforded him much less pleasure than the proof of the continued remembrance of him by Mrs. and Miss Sydney conveyed by Mr. Wandsworth's offer. He reflected with gratitude on the opportunity afforded him by his temporary pecuniary embarrassment of judging of that world of which he had previously formed so erroneous an opinion.

Strathern had been a proud, and not a vain man; and, conscious of his own high-minded and generous feelings, he had believed himself worthy of inspiring friendship and esteem. Adversity, brief as had been its visit, had taught him that the very qualities in the possession of which he had prided himself had only served to render him the dupe of the artful and designing among the heartless associates with whom he mixed, proving to him that even the noblest qualities are unvalued, if not prejudicial to their owner, when only brought in contact with those incapable of appreciating them. He had himself alone to blame for not having more wisely chosen his companions, and for having, without the least exercise of his judgment in their selection, fallen into the routine of fashionable life with its futile members, instead of having sought the acquaintance of the wise and good.

Henceforth, how differently would he act! Yes; he would yet redeem the time he had lost, the follies he had committed. He would cultivate the acquaintance of those only whose example would be profitable, and whose esteem would be honourable. He would prove that he merited respect, not for his wealth, but for his good qualities; and a day might come when Louisa Sydney would once more deign to restore him to the place he once held in her heart. There was comfort, there was happiness in this hope, vague and distant as its realization might be, and Strathern laid it to his heart. But, though cheerful, he was not elated. The vicissitudes of fortune he had experienced, although slight when compared with those of other men, had sobered his mind; and the sad event which had enriched him awakened reflections on the uncertainty of life that

precluded him from feeling the joy generally felt by young heirs on gaining a splendid inheritance.

Ere three days had elapsed since the announcement of the large fortune which had fallen to him, the creditors, and Mr. Drinkwater was among the first, sent in the most civil letters, stating their willingness to wait Mr. Strathern's own convenience for the settlement of their accounts. The very men who had but a few days before urged the strongest plea of dire necessity as an excuse for pressing the immediate payment of their bills—nay, who had taken legal proceedings to enforce it—were now in no sort of haste to receive the amount, and only “solicited the honour of a continuance of his favours.” The fashionable world, too—that world composed, for the most part, of the heartless scions of nobility, too proud to work, but not ashamed to borrow or beg; and of fortune-hunting mothers and their calculating daughters, longing to exchange the dull paternal roof and stinted pocket-money, for a fine mansion and liberal pin-money, to be supplied by a rich husband, again extended to him their advances; but he had now discovered the hollowness of their friendships, and had determined henceforth to seek only among that portion of the true nobility and gentry who eschew fashion and folly as synonymous, and who reflect honour on their country, associates to be in time ripened into friends.

CHAPTER LV.

Hail, wedded love! the purest bliss on earth,
 The sweet'ner of man's life, in mercy given
 To soothe his cares, to cheer his home and hearth,
 And grant him here a foretaste of that heaven
 He humbly hopes in after life to reach,
 How many virtues canst thou only teach!
 What melting charities are in thy bond,
 That sacred tie that death alone can rend;
 The tender, faithful wife, the mother fond,
 The truest and the most devoted friend,
 The gentlest nurse to soothe the couch of pain,
 When medicine has tried its art in vain.

The balmy air of Naples, and the tender care of the most devoted and watchful nurse that man was ever blessed with, did much towards the slow but gradual recovery of Lord Delmington. He

still, however, remained too great an invalid to be allowed to take any part in the conduct of his own affairs; and as his youthful wife was little skilled in such matters, and their physician devoted all his leisure hours to the study of botany and chemistry, the financial department was imprudently confided to the management of their *courrier*. This man, taking advantage of the inexperience and misplaced confidence of his employers, not only embezzled large sums by presenting false accounts and receipts, but also forged the signature of Lord Delmington to bills drawn on Strathern to a large amount, and decamped, leaving his master with only a very few *louis* in his purse, and deeply in debt.

It was lucky that the worthy doctor, more provident and guarded than his patient, had some funds safe in his own keeping, which he immediately placed at his disposal. The banker too, a worthy man, no sooner heard of the flight and forgery of the *courrier*, than he came forward to request that Lord Delmington would continue to draw through his house as previously, so that the fond and amiable couple suffered but little inconvenience from an event which, under other circumstances, might have placed them for the time in a very painful and embarrassing position. They were little aware of the change in Strathern's finances, or of the difficulties in which his generosity to them had plunged him, and, consequently, Lord Delmington drew on him with perfect confidence, not only in his inclination, but also in his power to honour the bills he drew.

The time was now approaching when Lady Delmington was to become a mother, and the joyful anticipation of this longed-for event seemed to bestow fresh strength on the delicate frame of her husband, a change which was hailed with pious gratitude to the Giver of all good by this excellent young creature, who looked forward with dread to the chance of his health suffering, during her confinement, from the want of her incessant care. Seldom, perhaps, had so much happiness been accorded to those who had made a stolen marriage, as to this pair. The only alloy to their felicity consisted in their regret for the sole act of disobedience of which Lord Delmington had ever been guilty; and yet, deeply as they deplored its consequences in having excited such displeasure and implacable anger on the part of the Marquis of Roehampton, neither of them could wish the fond and holy tie that bound their destinies undone—they only grieved that such happiness as they enjoyed should have been purchased at the heavy price of a father's

wrath, and prayed that he might yet be induced to pardon and receive them beneath the parental roof.

Often did Lady Delmington wish that the rank of her husband had been less elevated; for, though formed to adorn the most exalted station, she was so simple in her tastes, so unambitious in her nature, and so wholly and passionately attached to her lord, that she would have preferred a modest competency with him, free from the humiliating and unjust suspicions entertained by his father of her having wedded him, not from affection, but from interested motives, to the most brilliant position and the possession of unbounded wealth. Every day served to bring forth some new and admirable quality in this charming young woman. Her sweetness of temper, gentleness of manner, and the intuitive quickness with which she anticipated the wants and wishes of her husband, increased his attachment to her every hour; and as he beheld her gliding with noiseless step to minister to his comfort, cheering him by her sweet smiles, reading to him aloud, and proving, by her comments on the books she perused, how just, refined, and pure was her taste, he blessed the hour that gave such a treasure to his home, even while lamenting that this blessing had deprived him of his father's countenance, for affection he could not say he had ever experienced from his parent.

"Could he but behold her," would he often say to himself, "discharging the duties of a wife, or rather as a ministering angel watching over his only child, and wooing back health to this feeble frame, by her tenderness and incessant care, surely even his sternness would relent, and he would bestow the only thing requisite to render our happiness perfect—his approval and benediction."

At other times, Lord Delmington would indulge in day-dreams peculiar to the young and delicate. He would fancy himself in the home of his childhood, restored to a father's love, his sweet and gentle Mary cherished and fondly appreciated by his parent, and their child caressed in his grandfather's arms.

"Yes, so it will, it *must* be one day," would Lord Delmington exclaim, when alone, and this hope soothed his affectionate heart when pained by the recollection of Lord Roehampton's wrath, which too frequently recurred to interrupt a happiness that would without this one alloy have been perfect.

At length, the blessing of being a father was accorded to him; and as he pressed his infant son in his arms, and thanked the Almighty for this new treasure, he breathed a prayer for forgiveness,

for having by his disobedience inflicted pain on his own parent, and vowed henceforth to atone for this one sin by every means in his power.

There are few scenes in life more touching than that in which a youthful and doting pair contemplate for the first time the little being whose birth seems a new tie to bind them still more indissolubly to each other; the recent danger of the young mother, before which her husband's heart has quailed while feeling on how frail a thread has depended her life and his entire happiness; the deep gratitude that she has been spared to him, and their mutual tenderness for the dear infant, which appears to their partial eyes to be a prodigy of beauty, renders the chamber of the young mother a sacred and holy place, whence thanksgivings fresh and pure from the heart ascend to Heaven. When Lord Delmington pressed his lips to the velvet cheek of his little son, almost fearful as he did so that his caresses might injure the delicate creature, and resigned it to the arms of its beautiful mother, what a glance of ineffable tenderness was exchanged between the young parents as their faces bent together over that of their child, invoking a blessing on its head!

Perfect tranquillity being enjoined by the doctor, Lord Delmington, with all a lover's fondness and almost a woman's care, took his station by the couch of his wife. There would he remain for whole hours, watching her while she ministered its food to their infant with all a mother's pride and delight, or while she slumbered with the babe by her side, their gentle breathing mingling together, and she smiling in her happy dreams. Often would she half open her languid eyes, and put forth her small white hand to feel that her happiness was not all a dream, that she was indeed a mother, and that her infant was safe, then turn those melting eyes with a look of unutterable tenderness on her husband, and close them again in slumber, her beautiful mouth wearing a smile of such heartfelt contentment as brought tears of gratitude to the eyes of him who watched over her with such brooding love.

And when the ninth day was over, that day named by doctors and nurses as the epoch on which danger for young mothers may be said to be over, and consequently that a little more freedom from the restrictions enjoined by that despot of the sick room, the doctor, may be enjoyed, how did the fond pair pour forth their feelings, the expression of which had been suppressed for so many days, as they in turn embraced their child, each pronouncing its

little features to bear a striking resemblance to the other, and professing to love it more fondly on that account! "Only look, dearest," would Lady Delmington say, as she gazed with maternal joy and pride on her son; "how like his dear beautiful eyes are to yours! See how bravely he meets the light without lowering his lids!"

"His eyes, my blessed Mary, are much more like yours, and he has got your little mouth exactly."

"How can you say so, Henry? Only ask nurse, and she will confirm my assertion that baby is the image of you."

"So every nurse is bound to say especially when mammas, like my own Mary, are given to flattering their husbands."

"See, how I can make the darling smile by tickling his dear little chin," would the doting mother say, applying her slender and rose-tipped finger to the dimpled chin of the child. "Isn't he a perfect love, dearest? and look at his beautiful little hands. Were there ever such lovely little hands seen before?"

"So, I dare say, every mother has thought when looking at her first born," would Lord Delmington say, trying to look grave.

"Now, really, Henry, you affront me; you seem so sensible and wise about *our* child, just as if he were no more beautiful than any other infant."

And then the delighted husband would clasp the mother and child to his breast, and confess that he had never previously believed an infant *could* be so beautiful, and his happy wife would repay the confession with a glance full of tenderness.

"Let us name him after your father, dearest," said Lady Delmington. "Perhaps this dear little fellow may yet make our peace with his grandfather. Ah! I should then have no wish on earth ungratified, except to see you restored to health."

"But I am so much better, Mary. Your nursing has made me so. What should I have done without you?" and he stooped to kiss her fair and polished brow.

Every day marked the progress of returning health to the fond pair, and increasing vigour to their child, and as its eyes wandered over the objects around, its parents believed that even already it was endowed with a power of observation reserved for children several months older, and bailed with delight its growing intelligence. Lady Delmington had left her chamber, and taken the air several times, accompanied by her lord, when the sad intelligence

of the death of the Marquis of Roehampton reached them. The blow was severely felt by both, but the perfect sympathy existing between them served as a consolation under this heavy trial.

Unlike the generality of young heirs, Lord Delmington had never desired the possession of the vast estates entailed on him, and, stern and unrelenting as his father had proved, the wish nearest his heart since the day he had led his Mary to the altar was, that he might be allowed to present her to his sire; that lengthened days might be accorded to the marquis, to witness the felicity of his son, to appreciate her who conferred it, and to bless his grandchild and children to come. Now this fond hope was vanished. His father had died without seeing him, without having assured him of his forgiveness, and bitter were the tears he shed at this reflection. Sorrow shared is lightened. No common-place words of condolence escaped the lips of the tender wife as she witnessed the grief of her husband: but the tears that mingled with his, the gentleness that forbore to urge one vain word of consolation, did more to soothe the bitterness of his regret than all the eloquence of oratory or the reasoning of philosophy could have achieved. It was no joy to them to find themselves, from a state of dependance on the liberality of a friend, suddenly elevated to high rank and immense possessions. For many days they were insensible to this fact, and remembered only that they had lost a father whose affection they had counted on winning by future obedience and devotion to his wishes, and whose declining days they had hoped to render happy by their affectionate care. The atoning grave had closed over *him*, to have conciliated whom they would have submitted to any humiliation, and all his coldness and sternness were forgotten in the regret his death occasioned them.

"Ah! had he but lived to see our child," would the Marquis of Roehampton, as we must now call him, say, "I could have better borne this blow; but to die without knowing you, my own Mary, and, consequently, without being able to judge how impossible it was to see and not love you, to know and not esteem you—ah! this is, indeed, a terrible aggravation to my grief."

"We will love and revere his memory, dearest," would the marchioness reply, "and teach our boy to honour it, too. We will ever act as if *he* were still alive to approve or condemn our conduct; and, though he knew me not on earth, let us hope we may hereafter meet where no partings are, and where the secrets of all hearts being revealed, our father will know that, though far inferior

in station to his son, no unworthy motive led me to become his wife, and that, if never-dying love and boundless gratitude could repay the sacrifice my Henry made in wedding one so lowly as his Mary, the debt was not forgotten."

Many days had elapsed before the Marquis and Marchioness of Roehampton had conquered their grief sufficiently to undertake their voyage home; and, in the interim, the news of their accession to rank and fortune was made known by the newspapers at Naples to all the English persons of distinction there, and excited, as is usual on similar occasions, much conversation. Lord and Lady Wellerby had been to call on the British minister's wife, where some other visiters were discussing how many thousands, or tens of thousands a-year, the rent-roll of the present marquis amounted to.

"The marchioness is a very beautiful woman," observed one of the party.

"Yes, so I hear," replied Lady Wellerby, "and owes her good fortune solely to being so, for she is said to be low-born, stupid, and vulgar, which induced me to decline making her acquaintance.

"Your ladyship is not always so very scrupulous," remarked a lady present, "for I believe you receive the Marchioness of Mountserratt, who, if report be true, is one of the most vulgar women in the world."

"I should not cite her as a well-bred woman, certainly," replied Lady Wellerby, drawing herself up, and looking angry in spite of her attempts to conceal her displeasure; "but she is by no means so vulgar as you seem to think, and her reputation is irreproachable."

"Yes, that I'll be sworn it is," said the British minister, "for she is much too ugly either to endanger her own virtue, or to tempt that of others."

"I am sure that I am the last person in the world to judge harshly, or to propagate scandal," observed Lady Wellerby, an assertion that produced a general smile on the faces of all present; "but I must say that *I have* heard rumours relative to the Marchioness of Roehampton by no means creditable to her. It has been stated, that when she first travelled with her husband, she had no legal right to his name."

"Never was there a more false rumour," replied the wife of the English minister, with warmth. "One of my oldest and dearest

friends was present at the marriage, a few days previously to the young couple leaving England, and although they did not wish to enter society until the old marquis, a stern and severe man, had become reconciled to the step his son had taken, there existed no other reason for their seclusion. My friend has known Lady Roehampton from her birth, and this charming young woman never left the roof of her father, a clergyman, esteemed and respected by all who knew him, until at his death she removed to the house of my friend, where she was married. Lady Delmington brought me a letter of introduction from this friend, stating every particular about her; and I have had the greatest pleasure in enjoying as much of her society as the delicate health of her husband and her own interesting position permitted her to give me."

"I confess I have a great prejudice against young women of that class intruding themselves into noble families," observed Lady Wellerby, foiled, and vexed at being so, in her desire to asperse the reputation of the young marchioness, "when there are so many girls of high birth left unmarried. Parsons' daughters may always find husbands among the doctors, apothecaries, curates, or attorneys in their respective parishes; but what are young girls of high birth to do who cannot condescend to marry out of their own sphere?"

"Precisely what many of them do," replied Mrs. Maitland, the lady who gave the *coup de patte* to Lady Wellerby about the Marchioness of Mountserratt, and who bore no good-will to her ladyship—"set all their wits to work to catch some good-natured young man, with more money than brains, flatter and wheedle him into marriage, and then congratulate themselves on their own cleverness in having achieved the desired end."

Lady Wellerby felt the stroke aimed at her, but, aware that she would fare the worst in a war of words with Mrs. Maitland, who was remarkable for a system of plain speaking to those she disliked, her ladyship forbore making any further comment, and her adversary looked around in conscious triumph at having silenced her, aware that Lady Wellerby was so unpopular that no one present would regret her mortification.

"Well, you may all say what you please," observed Lord Wellerby, who had hitherto been talking politics in a corner with his host, but who had heard the comments made on Lady Mountserratt. "I have seldom met with a better natured woman than the Marchioness of Mountserratt. And, after all, I have know many women of high rank—ay, and born to it, too—who were wont to commit as

many solecisms in good breeding as she does, yet no one minded *their coarseness*."

"Because *they* had high connexions, and one knew that their vulgarity did not originate in low birth or want of education," replied one of the ladies present.

"Which should, in my opinion, have aggravated, rather than extenuated their sins," said their host, "as a person with the advantages of birth and education is much less excusable for being vulgar and coarse than one who has unexpectedly attained a position for which her birth and breeding had not fitted her."

"You are perfectly right, perfectly right," observed Lord Wellerby, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "That is precisely what I say. I think Lady Mountserratt much less blameable for any little mistakes she may make than some of the ladies known to us all, but whom I will not name."

He looked at his wife, and she, comprehending that he wished her to say something favourable of the marchioness, remarked, "Really, *I*," laying strong emphasis on the egotistical letter, "can see no reason why Lady Mountserratt should not be well received in society."

"I dare say *you* do not," replied Mrs. Maitland, "for you are fond of cards, and the person in question is, I have heard, willing to make up a rubber. At Newmarket I have been told that noblemen of the highest rank condescend to bet with persons of the lowest grade, so on this principle I can understand your associating with this low-bred woman; but those who have no such inducement will not be disposed to follow your example;" and Mrs. Maitland withdrew, leaving both Lord and Lady Wellerby highly incensed against her, while the other individuals present were amused at witnessing their discomfiture.

On leaving the minister's they drove to half a dozen places, with the intention of engaging some of their acquaintances to partake the hospitality of the marchioness, but all declined, except two or three young men of fashion, who having no engagements, and being curious to see the wife that their *ci-derant* friend Mountserratt had wedded for her gold, promised to meet the Wellerbys, who were to present them to their hostess.

"I see it's no use endeavouring to get women of rank to make her acquaintance," said Lady Wellerby to her husband, as they returned to their hotel. "Our attempts only draw attacks on us. Did you hear that odious, spiteful Mrs. Maitland?"

“Yes, and if you had the slightest portion of address you ought to have retorted. But you never know what to say! There you sat, getting red in the face, and bristling as you always do when you are vexed, without uttering one word in return for all her impertinence.”

“Why did not you, who are so very clever, come to my aid?” demanded the lady, angrily.

“Because a man always looks like a fool when he meddles with the quarrels of women. You drew the whole thing on yourself by your folly in attacking Lady Rochampton, and letting all present see that you were jealous and spiteful, because one of your girls had not caught her husband. You have no tact, Lady Wellerby, and so I have often told you, which is a great misfortune to a woman who is maliciously disposed.”

“You are the only person, Lord Wellerby, who ever accused me of want of tact, and the accusation comes with a peculiarly bad grace when you have so lately reaped the benefit of my good management in not only securing a brilliant marriage for our daughter, but in saving you all the expense of her *trousseau*, nay, the cost of the breakfast.”

“Ah, there you are, always boasting of your own cleverness! I shall never hear the end of your self-laudations about that marriage, when it was the most natural thing in life that a weak, good-natured fellow like Fitzwarren, who did not know what to do with himself at Rome, should fall into the snare set for him by Olivia, who has ten times more sense and judgment than you have, and to whom all the credit of the affair is due.”

Lady Wellerby wrote a little note to the marchioness, to apprise her that three guests, young men of great distinction, as she stated, were to be added to her dinner-party that day.

“I’m glad of it,” exclaimed that lady, when Mrs. Bernard had read the note to her. “A fresh face or two will be a relief to me, for I am tired to death of those I daily see. Are you sure you wrote to Mr. Webworth, to say I should be glad to receive him at dinner every day while I stay here?”

“Yes, madam.”

“That’s a sensible man. Understands a good dinner, and good wine, and enjoys them. Order some more champagne to be put in ice, for I dare say these fashionable young men will drink a good deal, and I hate to have any one stinted at my table. Has the *currier* brought back the money for my cheque?”

“ Yes, madam, and I have locked it in your ladyship’s *coffre*.”

“ Then put the one hundred pounds in gold into something. Yet no—I’ll get a reticule from Justin. So go and ask her for one.”

“ If your ladyship would permit me to ring the bell,” said Mrs. Bernard, timidly, “ and have Justine sent for to receive your orders.”

“ Why, are you so grand that you can’t take a message to her?”

“ Pray, madam, be assured that my objection to convey your commands to her does not originate in any false pride, but Justine is sometimes so rude to me that I wish as much as possible to avoid coming in contact with her.”

“ And what do you call this objection on your part but false pride, I should like to know? If Justin is a little saucy sometimes, you must put up with it, I can tell you; for, as I can’t do without her, she dresses me so beautifully, and that I could easily get a person to write my notes, and do all that you are employed for, I would sooner, a hundred times, send you away than part from her.”

Mrs. Bernard sighed deeply, went on her errand to the *femme de chambre*, and, as she had anticipated, was told by her that “ *She* certainly would not give one of *madame la marquise*’s beautiful *reticules* to any one but *madame la marquise* herself,” which answer induced that lady to go in person to demand it.

“ I wish *madame* would never send dat odious woman to ask me for nothing,” said Mademoiselle Justine. “ She so proud, so insolent, I cannot put up vid her. I know dat *madame* had von reticule vid her and not vant anoder, for I tink to myself, vat *madame la marquise* vant vid two?”

“ But I *did* want it though, and sent Mrs. Bernard for it.”

“ *Ah! c’est autre chose*. Dat is oder ting. Vitch vill *madame* have!” and some two or three dozen richly-embroidered *sacs* of various colours were taken from an *armoire* and spread before their owner, who selecting a white one, said,

“ This will do, Justin, you may lock up the rest.”

“ *Mon dieu! mon dieu!*” exclaimed the *femme de chambre*, “ *madame la marquise* has taken de von dat is de most pretty of dem all. Oh! vat pity to give it away. It break my heart to see *madame la marquise* give away de bootiful tings dat is only fit for *madame* herself to wear,” and tears of anger, at seeing what she considered to be one of her own perquisites taken off, filled the eyes of Mademoiselle Justine.

"There, Justin, you may take that dress I wore yesterday, it will match the bonnet I gave you the day before. Don't cry, Justin, I know you are attached to me, and I *won't* send Mrs. Bernard with any more messages to you."

"Ah! I hope *madame la marquise* vill no forget her promise," said Justine, never even thanking her mistress for the expensive dress just given as a peace-offering to her.

"Vat for she vant dat *sac*?" continued she, when the marchioness retired. "I vill find out, dat I vill. Bah! bah! vat fool I vas not to know in von minute! De old fool vant it to put de hundred pounds in, dat I did hear her troo de keyhole say she vould give dat horrid Lady Sophie. Ha! ha! she tink to keep de secret from me, but she sall not? I vill know every ting, dat I vill."

CHAPTER LVI.

Paris! woman's Paradise,
 Scene of gaiety and pleasure;
 That to ev'ry taste supplies
 Fashions, without end or measure;
 Temple of Frivolity,
 Whence *ennui* is ever banished,
 Where no rueful face we see
 Till the owner's gold is vanished.

"Who do you think is arrived, Livy?" said Lord Fitzwarren one day, as he entered the dressing-room of his wife before dinner. "I will give you twenty, ay, fifty guesses, and you won't divine it."

"And certainly won't try, for I have a horror of guessing, and very little curiosity."

"In that case, I may as well tell you at once. The Marchioness of Mountserratt."

"And what can that be to me? I certainly won't notice her, and so I tell you at once, that you may not make any attempt to change my determination."

"She has not come alone. Your father, mother, and Sophy, have accompanied her, and they seem now to make but one family."

"Good heavens, how dreadful! But are you sure of this, Lord

Fitzwarren, or is it one of your *mauvaises plaisanteries*, got up to alarm and shock me?"

"I assure you, Livy, it is the fact. I saw the whole party arrive at the Hotel Windsor, Place Vendôme, half an hour ago, and would have stepped in to see the old governor, my lady, and Sophy, only I thought it best to give them time to rest themselves a little after their journey."

"Heaven be thanked that you did *not* call on them, for then they would have found out where we are, and we should be bored by them."

"Bored by your own father, mother, and sister, Olivia? I never heard of such a thing—and after your first separation from them too!" and Lord Fitzwarren's looks denoted the surprise he felt.

"You don't know them as well as I do, or your surprise would cease," observed Lady Fitzwarren. "I am convinced that they are now *en route* for London, contrary to their original intention purposely because they calculate on living on us there as much as they possibly can, a calculation which I decidedly will defeat. The most effectual mode of doing this is to treat them with such marked coldness here as will discourage them to intrude themselves on us in London, and for this coldness *they* have furnished us with an admirable excuse in thus associating themselves with that dreadfully vulgar woman, Lady Mountserratt, my horror and aversion of whom is perfectly well known to them."

"Well, Livy, you are a cool hand, I must acknowledge. By Jove, you must make no more of bowing out of the acquaintance of your own family than if they were persons in no way related to you!"

"And why should I, pray?"

"Why, I remember a certain commandment taught me in my childhood, about honouring my father and mother, and I thought that it might possibly have some influence on you."

The lady bit her lip, and looked somewhat embarrassed for a moment, but, quickly recovering her usual effrontery, she reiterated her fixed determination of not calling on her parents, and, if they called, of giving them so cold a reception that they would not be tempted to renew the visit.

"You may do as you like, Livy," replied her good-natured husband, "but I'll be hanged if you shall make me behave ill to them. I never could stand the abominable system of cutting acquaintances,

much less relations, so I *will* call on them and show any civility in my power."

"Did you not promise, Lord Fitzwarren, never to engage any guest to dinner without my permission?"

"I could not suppose that your father and mother were included in that compact."

"Then I tell you," and the speaker's face grew red with anger, "that I consider that compact to include my family as all other persons, and that if you break it I shall pronounce you to have forfeited your word of honour to me."

"I shall, therefore, to avoid infraction of the promise I so weakly, so stupidly, allowed to be extracted from me in a moment when I dreaded being compromised before a friend, invite those to whom I wish to extend hospitality to some *restaurant's* at Paris, or to the Clarendon Hotel when I am in London; I but assure you, Livy, weak and foolish as you have found me, you shall not persuade me to behave unkindly and improperly to your relations."

Lord and Lady Fitzwarren dined that day at an English nobleman's then resident at Paris, where the arrival of the Marchioness of Mountserratt furnished the topic of conversation. "At my hotel," said a young man of fashion, at table, "the whole house is put in commotion by the event. '*Madame la marquise, riche comme Crésus, généreuse comme un milord anglais, avant que les Anglais fussent gâtés par l'économie, et avec une suite énorme,*' might be heard repeated from the proprietor of the Hotel Windsor down to the lowest waiter in the house. *Madame la marquise*, as her *courrier* announced, required more rooms and more luxuries than half a dozen ordinary marchionesses; and Heaven only knows how many bottles of champagne had been put into ice, and how large and additional supply of that article had been ordered in, to meet the demand *sa seigneurie* would inevitably make on it."

"I was greatly amused at hearing all this from my valet as I dressed for dinner," said Lord Thomas Murray; "and he told me that the arrival of a queen could not have excited a greater sensation in the hotel. This marchioness, as Mirraffleur, my valet, stated, is so grand a lady that she has an English earl for her chamberlain, a countess for her *dame d'atour*, and a *miladi anglaise* for her lady of the bedchamber."

"This must be an invention of her *courrier's*, to impress the people at the hotel with a higher notion of the importance of his lady," observed Lord Ammondale, a pompous, matter-of-fact man,

ever ready to assert the dignity of his order; "for the marchioness, whatever her fortune may be, could find no English lords or ladies who would submit to the degradation of filling such appointments in her household."

"Did you hear the names of these mean members of the aristocracy," demanded the stately and haughty Lady Llangollen, her Cambrian blood mounting to her face at the idea of any branches of the nobility having so disgraced themselves.

"No, I did not hear the names," replied Lord Thomas Murray. "Monsieur, like most of his compatriots, can never remember English names."

Lady Fitzwarren sat on thorns while this conversation was going on, lest the names of her parents should be uttered; not that she entertained the slightest affection or interest for them, but solely on account of the disgrace which their position with the vulgar marchioness would entail on herself.

"I have heard," said Lord Ammondale, "that the Marquis of Mountserratt married some adventuress for her money, and deserted her the moment he had inherited the fortune of his brother."

"Somebody told me she was a ballad-singer, whom some rich old man, a monomaniac about music, heard sing in the streets, became captivated by her voice, and married," observed Lady Ammondale.

"Oh! no. She was one of a party of Irish persons of the lowest class, who came over to England to make hay, and was employed by this rich old citizen at his place near London; when in the hayfield, he heard her sing, and became so charmed that very shortly after he married her, and when dying bequeathed his immense wealth to her," said Lord Thomas Murray.

"You are all in error, I assure you. This person was a chamber-maid in an hotel at some watering-place, where the rich old man saw her, and wedded her," stated Lady Llangollen; "for I heard all the particulars from the Duchess of Chester, who was staying at the hotel where the marriage was arranged."

Lady Fitzwarren expected every moment that her lord would join in the conversation, and not only acknowledge his acquaintance with the marchioness, but inform the company who the lord and ladies domesticated with her were; but, fortunately for her feelings, he was so deeply engaged in conversing with an old acquaintance, who sat by him, on horses, the subject of all others the most interesting to him, that he paid no attention to the general topic, and

she for once rejoiced when she heard the words, "Capital goer," "thorough-bred," "fine action," "great speed," uttered by him, followed by the often-repeated question to his old cronies of "You remember Fanny!—*that was* a creature not to be matched!" and, as usual, a long-winded and elaborate panegyric was pronounced on the never-forgotten favourite mare of her husband. Glad was she when the ladies retired from the *salle à manger* without Lord Fitzwarren's having revealed his and her acquaintance with Lady Mountserratt; and more decided than ever did she feel, in not only avoiding that personage, but also in shunning all intercourse with her family while they lived with her, and seeing as little of them as possible whenever they separated from the marchioness. In accordance with this determination, she gave strict orders to be denied to all English visitors the next day, and congratulated herself on having by this precaution escaped an interview she so much dreaded.

"You will, of course, go and call on Livy as early as you can get out," said Lord Wellerby to his lady wife, as they sat at breakfast. "I have been to Galignani's this morning, and here's their address, which I obtained there. See if you can't get Livy to buy some dresses for Sophy; and if you set about it cleverly, you can."

"I don't anticipate much generosity from Lady Fitzwarren," observed her mother. "Her husband is more likely to behave well."

"Yes; he is such a foolish fellow, that he is always ready to throw away his money; but Livy has more sense."

"If I get no presents until my sister bestows any on me, I shall remain a long time in want of *cadeaux*," said Lady Sophia, with a sneer.

"Well, Livy is not to be blamed for prudence and economy, two virtues which I did all in my power to inculcate in her mind," observed Lord Wellerby.

"Should she, as I expect, not be disposed to evince any generosity towards her sister, we can, by referring to her want of it, in the presence of Lady Mountserratt, excite *her* into making presents to Sophy, for I have noticed that she is very ostentatious, and wishes to outshine others in acts of generosity," said Lady Wellerby.

"What a bore it is for me to have to go and ask the ambassadress for an invitation for her for the *soirée* at the embassy to-night!" resumed Lady Wellerby.

"Has she not made it well worth your trouble?" demanded her lord. "Has she not franked us the whole route from Rome, and are we not here her guests, without the least necessity of spending a shilling, instead of having expended a large sum on the journey, and being in the worst rooms of some shabby hotel, eating bad dinners and drinking *vin ordinaire*?"

"For all which *désagrémens* there does not exist the slightest necessity," said Lady Wellerby, "if you would remember that you have ample means to pay the expenses of your family, without compelling them to submit to the humiliation of forming part of the suite of this vulgar woman, and being included in the ridicule which she must always incur."

"Lady Wellerby, you prove yourself in this instance, as in many others, wholly deficient in tact and common sense. If you possessed the *first*, you could easily manage to gain an introduction for the marchioness into the circles which she so longs to enter, a service she would liberally reward, and if you had the *second*, you would know how to appreciate the advantage of travelling and living, as we do, at another's expense. You had better go first to the ambassador's, to get an invitation for Lady Mountserratt; that point arranged, you can call on Livy afterwards."

"But how am I to get over the fact of Lady Mountserratt never having been presented at the English court?—that is, you know, the *règle* for our ambassadress here receiving ladies."

"You can easily explain that, being married in Italy, and not having been in England since, she could not, of course, be presented in London, but that she will be, as soon as she arrives."

Luckily for Lady Wellerby, the English ambassadress, one of the most kind and amiable women in the world, readily acceded to her request, and the more readily as the Marquis of Mountserratt being a relation of hers, she felt shocked at his desertion of the woman he had duped, and having heard that her moral character was unimpeachable, was glad to show, in this instance, as in all others where her countenance could be given without infringing on the rules of strict propriety, that good nature for which she was so remarkable. Possessed of the card of invitation, Lady Wellerby returned to the hotel to announce the success of her mission to the marchioness, as that lady had requested her to do.

"Well, now really you *have* behaved very well in this business," said she, when Lady Wellerby gave her the card—for, fearful that she might not have succeeded in obtaining it, the countess had pre-

viously explained all the difficulty of accomplishing the point, owing to the marchioness not having been presented at the English court — “And to show you,” resumed Lady Mountserratt, “that I am not ungrateful, if you will come with me to the best milliners in Paris, I’ll give you the handsomest turban that can be bought, and an elegant dress, and also one for Lady Sophy, with a beautiful wreath of flowers for her hair.”

Lady Wellerby’s face flushed with offended pride at this openly offered compensation for her having obtained the invitation to the embassy, and there was a degree of *hauteur* she could not wholly repress in her air and countenance when she declared that she required no reward for doing anything to oblige a friend.

“Ah! there it is; I see you are on your high horse, my lady, and I’m sure I can’t tell why, for there’s nothing to affront one, according to my notions, in offering some handsome presents; but you ladies of old families have such odd ways that one does not know when one offends you or not.”

“I am not at all offended, I assure you,” replied Lady Wellerby; “I was only fearful lest you should imagine that I was influenced by selfish motives in my desire to oblige you.”

“Well, and after all, where would the harm be if you were? Give and take is my principle. You’ll come back, won’t you, to accompany me to the milliner’s?”

“Yes, certainly, I will be back in time to go with you.” And off went Lady Wellerby, her lord, and daughter, to call on Lady Fitzwarren.

“*Madame la comtesse n’est pas chez elle,*” was the reply of the porter.

“*Mais êtes vous bien sûr?*” demanded Lady Wellerby, for she felt a conviction that her daughter *was* at home, it being rather early for one so indolent as she knew her to be, to go out. The porter persisted in his statement, and nothing was left for the party but to put their address into his hands, and drive away.

“You see they have found you out, Livy,” said Lord Fitzwarren, as the card was placed on his wife’s table. “So now, as you can’t accuse me of revealing your abode, I will go off and pay them a visit. What am I to say for you?”

“Say that I am out all day; that I am ill; in short, anything to keep them away from me.”

“No, Livy, I’ll tell no stories for you, and the fact I *can’t* tell; for I should be sorry to hurt their feelings by saying, ‘you have a

very unkind daughter, who won't see you if she can help it; 'yet hang me if wouldn't sooner tell them the truth, painful as it would be, than invent a pack of falsehoods, or repeat yours to take them in."

"I haven't the least objection—*au contraire*, I should be obliged to you to tell them that as they have disgraced themselves by living with their odious friend Lady Mountserratt, who is the laughing-stock of all Paris, I cannot, consistently with what I owe to myself, mix myself up with them."

"*Un bouquet pour madame la comtesse, de la part de Monsieur le duc de Beauregard,*" said one of the servants, handing in to the *femme de chambre* a most beautiful collection of flowers, artistically and tastefully arranged.

"What exquisite flowers, and how delicate and thoughtful of the *duc*, to whom I happened to mention last night my fondness for them!" observed Lady Fitzwarren.

"What is the fellow's Frenchified name?" asked her lord, looking anything but pleased.

"Beauregard," replied the lady.

"You are rich enough to buy as many flowers as you like, Livy, without being under any compliment to that conceited Frenchman, whose manner towards you, ever since he was presented, I think very impertinent, and so I have made up my mind to tell him on the very first occasion, for I have no notion of seeing any man make love to my wife."

"No one but a person so wholly ignorant as you are of *les bienséances* could possibly imagine that there was the least impropriety in the *duc's* attentions to me."

"*Bien* what?" demanded Fitzwarren looking puzzled. "You may give it what Frenchified name you like, but I will not allow you to be made the talk, nor myself to be made the laughing-stock, of all Paris, I can tell you. Why, didn't I hear some of the fellows at the embassy the other night gossiping and laughing when they saw this man-milliner-looking Frenchman stuck by your side all the evening. I heard some of them say 'Look at the *duc* at his old work, making up to every Englishwoman he meets, until he has set all the world talking of her!'"

"Brutes!" exclaimed the lady, "they are all dying of envy and jealousy of his immense superiority over them."

"Superiority indeed! Well, that's a good un, however. What! compare a d—d outlandish foreigner, with a face all over hair, out

of which he seems to peep like an owl out of an ivy-bush, to a parcel of good-looking, healthy Englishmen, who are not ashamed to show their faces like these Parisian ourang-outangs!" said the offended husband, leaving the room in a more angry mood than his wife had ever before seen him.

"Jealous! positively jealous!" exclaimed Lady Fitzwarren. "*Mais n'importe*—he shall not prevent me from flirting with this dear, fascinating *duc*. What a delightful man! He said last night he should only go to the embassy this evening to meet me. He *was* rather marked in his attentions, I must confess, and pressed my hand when he led me to my carriage, and asked me why I never drove in the *Bois de Boulogne*, where he always rides, and I half promised to go there to-morrow. Yes; he is a most captivating man — heighho! — and might prove a dangerous one to husbands."

Lady Wellerby and her daughter were ready at the appointed time, to accompany the Marchioness of Mountserratt to some of the most fashionable *magasins de modes* at Paris, and that lady, being in a particularly gracious mood, owing to the invitation to the embassy, presented them both with various costly additions to their wardrobes. On entering their carriage to return to their hotel, they met Lord Fitzwarren, Lord Wellerby, and M. Webworth, who stopped to speak to them. After mutual greetings, the marchioness, "on hospitable thoughts intent," invited Lord Fitzwarren and Mr. Webworth to dine with her.

"And I shall be very glad to see Lady Fitzwarren," added she, "who I dare say will be anxious to meet her mother and sister, who missed her to-day, and, as I suppose she is engaged to the embassy this evening, we can all go there together."

Fitzwarren declined the invitation, but Webworth joyfully accepted it.

"You thee, my dea mawchioneth, I couldn't stay afeew you," said he. "I was quite out of my element when you were gone."

"And, I assure you, I have missed *you* very much, Mr. Webworth, at dinner; so, mind, there will be a knife and fork for you every day here the same as at Naples."

"A thousand thanks, my dea madam."

"Now, if I let Livy know that they are to be at the embassy to-night, she won't go there," thought Lord Fitzwarren to himself.

"It will be a good trick to play her not to say a word on the

subject, and to let her go there and meet them full plump ; hang me if I don't do so ! I'm really ashamed of her, to be so unnatural towards her own parents and sister. And then her flirting so outrageously with that French fellow ! I must stop it, or I shall be laughed at by all Paris. What a fool I was to be taken in by such a heartless creature, and so plain a one into the bargain ! I hardly knew what to say to her mother and sister when they asked about her."

While these thoughts were passing in the mind of Lord Fitzwarren, Mr. Webworth, after a few minutes' silence, observed that he had never known a more kind and hospitable woman than the Marchioness of Mountserratt. "She weally ith a mosth excellenth pethon, and will in a shawth thime undestand how a table ought to be kept."

"A *table d'hôte*, I suppose you mean," said Lord Wellerby ; "for one of her manias seems to be to invite every one she meets to dinner."

"Come, come, old governor ; you ought to be the last person to find fault with the old girl's hospitality," remarked Lord Fitzwarren, "since you and your family have availed yourselves so freely of it. Livy has heard some spiteful remarks on this point ; people have even gone so far as to say you were her chamberlain, and the old lady and Sophy her ladies-in-waiting, which has so offended Livy that she declares she will not mix herself up with the party while you remain with the marchioness."

"Livy may do as she pleases, a privilege I mean to follow," replied Lord Wellerby ; "but as for giving up a very useful acquaintance to please *her*, it is out of the question."

"Only don't blame me if she runs restive, that's all, for she is as wild as a colt, as obstinate as a mule, and as vicious as any animal I ever had in my stable."

"So much the worse for *you*," was the only remark of his father-in-law, who heartily congratulated himself on having got rid of the lady in question.

When the Marchioness of Mountserratt appeared at the embassy that evening, escorted by Lady Wellerby and Lady Sophia, the splendour and quantity of her diamonds, and the extreme richness of her dress, attracted all eyes. "That is the famous Marchioness of Mountserratt, who is so immensely rich," was whispered around by all the English present, and the statement was listened to with eager ears by such of the foreigners as could comprehend the word rich, a word generally understood by most of them.

The presentation to the ambassadress having taken place, Lady Mountserratt seemed by no means inclined to pass on, and leave that lady free to receive her other guests. In vain did Lady Wellerby press her arm, and make signs to her to move on—there she remained, assuring her noble hostess how glad she was to see her, and hoping that she would come and dine with her in a family way at the Hotel Windsor, where she would give her the best dinner Paris could afford. “I never spare expense, my lady; and why should I” exclaimed she; while the ambassadress, embarrassed and shocked at a degree of vulgarity to which she had never previously been exposed, cast imploring looks at Lady Wellerby to free her from her friend.

“Who is dat lady vid dose very superb diamonds?” demanded the Duc de Beauregard of one of the *attachés* of the embassy, a lively young man, who, owing a grudge to the *duc*, was well disposed to mystify him.

“That,” replied he, “is the richest lady in all England.”

“Vat, de Miss Coutts?”

“No, no, a much richer lady.”

“Has she a husband?” asked the *duc* eagerly.

“No, her husband is off,” was the reply, which the *duc* received as an announcement of the death of the marquis.

“She free, den?” said he.

“Yes, perfectly free, and easy too,” observed the *attaché*.

“Richest lady in England, you are sure?” repeated the *duc*.

“Certainly.”

“Vill you present me?”

“I have not the honour of being acquainted with the lady, but I know Lady Wellerby, who is with her, and I will present you to her.”

“*Mille remerciements, mon cher*,” and off they moved. The introduction made, the *duc* begged Lady Wellerby to present him to the marchioness, a favour she readily accorded him, and the complacent smiles of that lady, when she heard the sonorous title of Duc de Beauregard pronounced, proved her satisfaction.

“You speak de French, madame?” demanded the *duc*.

“No, I am sorry to say I don’t, but I am learning,” was the reply.

“Den how happy I am dat I speak de English a liddle, dat I may converse vid so *charmante* a lady!”

“You are very polite, duke, and I am obliged to you.”

"No, madame, it is I who am obliged. I always like de English ladies, but dis evening I have seen one dat do eclipse all I ever did see before," and he looked full in the face of the marchioness.

"Well, I'm sure you are one of the most agreeable men, noble-men I meant to say, I ever met."

"Ah! madam, who would not die to be tought vell of by you!"

"Base man!" was muttered so close to his ear, that the *duc* turned and beheld Lady Fitzwarren, who, with a look of unutterable contempt, passed on.

"How d'ye do, Lady Fitzwarren?" exclaimed the marchioness. "Here's your mother and sister just behind me. Lady Fitzwarren! Lady Fitzwarren!" said she, so loud as to draw general attention; but Lady Fitzwarren walked on without appearing to hear her, or even looking towards the place where she stood, a line of conduct which the vain *duc* instantly set down to the extreme jealousy of that lady at having overheard his sweet speeches to the marchioness.

"Why, the woman must be deaf," exclaimed Lady Mountserratt, "or she would have heard me. Will you go to her, duke, and tell her that I, the Marchioness of Mountserratt, and her mother and sister, are here, and wish to speak to her?"

"Ah! madame, vat would I not do to obey *your* commands. *Mais*," and he shrugged his shoulders to his ears, and assumed a look of distress, "*que voulez-vous?* Lady Fitzwarren has been so very kind as to find your humble servant vere moche to her taste, and ven she saw that your humble servant did find anoder lady much more to *his* taste, she get so angry, and did visper in my ear as she passed, 'Base man!' *Pauvre dame*, she is vat you call jealous."

"Oh! then I'll go and tell her she has no cause; but how can a married woman be jealous, except of her husband?"

"*Charmente innocence!*" whispered the *duc*. "Every woman must be jealous ven she look at you."

"Olivia must have heard herself called," said Lady Wellerby to Lady Sophia.

"Yes, certainly; see, she is now leaving the room, I am sure to avoid us. What an unfeeling creature!"

"Give me your arm, Lord Fitzwarren, for I am determined not to stay a moment longer here," said his wife.

"But the carriage is gone, Livy."

“ I care not ; I will walk—go in a *fiacre*—do anything rather than confront that odious marchioness and my family, who have so disgraced me by being with her.”

“ And there’s your friend, the French duke, making desperate love to the marchioness. I suppose he’ll send *her* a cargo of flowers to-morrow ? ”

“ Who could have dreamt of that odious woman’s getting to the embassy !—she, who has never been presented in England ! ” said Lady Fitzwarren. “ But it is a *coup monté* by my abominable mother just to vex me, so I will defeat her schemes by leaving Paris to-morrow, without seeing any of them.”

“ I am devilish glad of it, for I have had quite enough of Paris, I can tell you,” was the answer, as the pair descended the stairs of the embassy, leaving a message that Lady Fitzwarren had been taken suddenly ill, which the Duc de Beauregard accounted for by confidentially whispering to half the men in the embassy “ that *la pauvre comtesse était malade de jalousie*.”

The next day the Fitzwarrens quitted Paris for London, the husband with a lengthened face at the reflection of the enormous sum his wife had expended there, and the lady thoroughly disgusted with Frenchmen, who only the previous day she had thought the most delightful persons in the world.

CHAPTER LVII.

O, Life, how quickly dost thou pass !
 E’en while we count on future years,
 The last sands flow from stern Time’s glass,
 And joyous smiles are changed to tears.
 Death’s ever near, though mortals blind
 Behold him not until his dart,
 By fate resistless and unkind
 Impelled, has pierced some lov’d one’s heart.
 The old, by length of days oppress’d,
 Lay down the load of life, and sleep ;
 The young, while hope still cheers the breast,
 And love and joy their senses steep
 In sweet Elysium, must, I ween,
 Go hence, and never more be seen,
 In the dark grave to dwell, till *He*
 Shall summons them *His* face to see.

“ This house wants to be thoroughly altered and entirely new furnished,” said Lady Fitzwarren to her lord, as they sat at breakfast in

the library of the mansion in Grosvenor Square, a few days after their arrival from Paris.

"Then it *shall* want it," replied her husband; "for I'll be hanged if I throw any more money away upon it for some time to come. Why, it was only last year that it was repaired and newly furnished."

"That may be, but it was done in such abominable bad taste that I should be perfectly ashamed to see company in it. And really I must insist on having the portraits of your horses and dogs removed from the walls. Such pictures may suit a bachelor's house, but are inadmissible in a married man's."

"What! would you have my beautiful Fanny's portrait taken down?—that likeness which you so often told me at Rome you longed to see!" and Lord Fitzwarren looked as amazed as he felt.

"My curiosity has now been perfectly satisfied, and therefore I advise you to have these pictures removed to your hunting-lodge at Melton, where they will be more appropriately placed."

"I tell you what, Livy, once for all, they *shall not* be removed. You may decorate your drawing-rooms, boudoir, and dressing-room as you please, but the other apartments shall remain as they are."

"Then I will not enter them," replied the lady, her cheeks flushed with anger, and her eyes flashing with scorn.

"You will do as you please about that, but let me advise you not to exhaust my patience too far. You have tried it nearly to its utmost limit, I can tell you, and I can't answer for its longer duration."

"And I can assure you, Lord Fitzwarren, that *mine* is already worn out. You bore me to extinction about your horses, dogs, and friends, who are hardly a degree superior to them in intelligence."

Lord Fitzwarren's face became red, and his compressed lips betrayed that he was endeavouring to control the passion that shook him; when his wife, observing the effect she had produced by her taunt, determined to follow it up by a display of cool contempt still more offensive, and began humming a tune.

"So I bore you, do I?" exclaimed he. "And you coolly tell me so, after having taken me in by affecting to like horses as much as I do! You know that I never would have been caught had you not thus imposed on me; but perhaps you do *not* know, and it is high time that you should hear a truth which my good nature

would have kept concealed, had you not provoked me too far, that it was only a sense of honour and pity that induced me to fulfil an engagement with you into which your flattery and pretence of similarity of tastes with my own led me, in a moment of folly, to form, and which I regretted, from the bottom of my heart, ever since !”

“ This well-bred confession excites only my contempt. But let *me* not be deficient in the amiable candour and frankness of which you have set me so good an example. Know then that, whatever may have been *your* indifference to me, *mine* towards you fully equalled it.”

“ But did I flatter or court you ? Did I affect to have a sympathy with *your* tastes or pursuits ? No, I should scorn such hypocrisy and meanness, even to win the hand of a woman I loved. From the hour I married you, I have noticed that you threw off the mask of affection and devotion to my wishes, with which, fool as I was, you caught me, and I began to see that I was your dupe ; but *now* that you have acknowledged your heartless and shameless duplicity, you shall find that I *am* and *will be* master of my own house.”

“ And you shall find that I am not a woman to be frightened by your violence and brutality. I know what is due to myself, and will exact it, too, I can tell you.”

Lord Fitzwarren arose from the table, and left the room in a state of anger and agitation he had never previously experienced ; while his countess walked to the mirror over the mantelpiece, and arranged the bows of her Parisian morning-cap, uttering, *sotto voce*, the monosyllable “ brute !”

“ Well,” resumed she, as she contemplated her own image in the glass, “ the mask is now thrown off on both sides, and this will be a relief, though, Heaven knows, I took little pains to wear it since we left Naples ! But really the man is too *bête*, and it was quite time we should come to an understanding, now that the honeymoon has nearly waned to its last phase. I only waited to get possession of the family diamonds, and the money for my *trousseau* and *corbeille*, before I enlightened him as to the state of my feelings, which any one who was not utterly stupid would, long ere this, have found out ; but men are so vain that they never discover our indifference, unless we force the knowledge on them.”

The unbounded generosity and good nature of Lord Fitzwarren had failed to produce any softening effect on any good-will or grace-

titude, in the callous breast of his selfish wife. Aware from the first moment of their engagement, that he loved her not, far from feeling grateful for his kindness and liberality, she despised him for having been caught so easily in the toils she had so artfully laid to entangle him, and piqued herself on the success of her schemes. At Paris she had satisfied almost to satiety her passion for dress and trinkets : and her husband, conscious of his own indifference for her, and desirous to atone for the involuntary wrong, had pleasure, during the first fortnight of their sojourn there, in lavishing on her every gift that struck her fancy, saying to himself, " Poor Livy, though I can't love her, I can at least gratify all her tastes ! " He attributed the ungracious change in her manner to her having discovered, in spite of his endeavours to conceal it, that she was not loved as brides expect to be, and this belief begot a pity and kindness on his part that gratitude on hers might have ripened into a good-will and friendship, that would have insured the comfort of their future lives.

But Lady Fitzwarren's was not a heart or mind susceptible of kindly emotions. Her vanity was wounded by finding that not even the display of affection and devotion which she affected to feel towards her affianced husband had created the slightest sentiment of admiration in him, and far from appreciating the honourable motives and good nature which induced the fulfilment of his engagement, she hated him with an intensity that rendered it difficult for her to control the demonstrations of dislike which were ever ready to escape on the least provocation on his part.

" Why, why did I marry ? " burst from the lips of Lord Fitzwarren, when he found himself alone. " Oh, what a dupe, what an idiot I have been ! And to find, after all, that she never loved me ! How I loathe her, now that I know her duplicity, her calculating coldness of heart ! But she shall no longer dupe me ; no, henceforth I will be firm, and prove to her that I *will* be master of my house and fortune."

The angry husband left his home in the hope that change of scene might banish the gloomy thoughts that oppressed him, and sought at his club some of the old associates with whom he had been wont, in his bachelor days, to while away many of his hours. The Marquis of Mountserratt was one of the first of his former friends whom he encountered lounging in his accustomed seat in the bay-window at White's. " Ah, Fitz, glad to see you : heard you were come. Why, you look as do ! Gul as a broken-down gamester after

losing his last hundred, or a young bridegroom on the day of his nuptials with a rich old woman."

"And you, Any, seem as happy as if you had heard of the death of a certain lady whom I left in high force at Paris some five or six days ago."

"Name her not, if you love me, Fitz. I had become oblivious of her very existence, until you, like a d—d good-natured friend, came and reminded me of it. But, as you *have* disturbed the equanimity of my temper on this point, I may as well learn what the lady is about. Have I any chance of being relieved by a bilious fever, or apoplexy, brought on by the excessive indulgence of her enormous appetite?"

"I cannot hold out any prospect of such good fortune to you, for it seems

‘As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on,’

as the man in the play said, and with her, a

‘Good digestion waits on appetite,
And health on both.’”

"By Jove, Fitz, you grow poetical! Who would have dreamt of hearing you quote Shakspeare?"

"I have quoted Shakspeare, have I? Well, I didn't know whose the lines were, but I remembered them because Mordaunt won a wager from Kirby about them, and the words were written down and given to me until the wager was decided."

"I suppose she was *au désespoir* at my flight?"

"I saw no symptoms of it. *Au contraire*, she expressed her satisfaction at having acquired a marquise without being saddled with a marquis."

"The monster!" exclaimed Lord Mountserrat; "how I hate her! I suppose you are the happiest of men, Fitz. Eh? This supposition is not, however, founded on your countenance, but on the high notion I have formed of the happiness of wedlock, when *congenial* minds are united in its bonds."

The sarcastic sneer on the face of the marquis convinced Lord Fitzwarren of the ironical intention of the speech, and displeased him.

"I am not more unhappy than other men in similar circumstances," replied he. "It is their own faults, if men are such fools as to be made miserable by women."

"Bravo, Fitz!—there spoke my old friend. I honour you for

your philosophy and firmness; and the more so, because I know that your fair countess, even as Lady Olivia Wellerby, was by no means deficient in a will of her own. I must call and pay my respects to her to-day."

"Ay, do; and if, as an old acquaintance, you could just hint to her that I am a devilish determined sort of fellow, it might save future contests for power between us."

"What, my friend, have you already commenced a civil war—of all wars the most inveterate and implacable?"

"No, not quite that; but women *are* prone to seek power, just as horses endeavour to master their owners. You remember Fanny? The finest animal I ever had in my possession; yet she often tried to have her own way. Poor Fauny! I shall never like any creature as much as I liked her!"

"A most ungallant speech for a Benedict not yet two months wedded, I must say," observed the marquis.

"You have doubtlessly heard of Strathern's luck? And most apropos did it come. He had got into great embarrassment; had overbuilt himself, accepted bills, gave away thousands to that stupid fool Olliphant, and was, in fact, dished, when, happily for him, Lord Argentyn and his three sons were drowned in a squall, returning to shore at the Isle of Wight, from their yacht; and so that prig, Strathern, steps into a noble fortune."

"Why, I always thought Strathern as rich as a Jew. I am devilish glad, however, that he has come off so well, for he's an excellent fellow. And so poor Olliphant is ruined! At play, I suppose?"

"Yes, at play, and on the turf. Regularly cleaned out, as we say."

"And like all who are so, he is called a fool by those who won his money!"

"*Que voulez-vous mon cher?* It is the way of the world."

"And a d——d bad way. Poor Olliphant was an excellent fellow, and no one's enemy but his own."

"The man who is his own enemy is every one's enemy. Fitz: for when he has ruined himself, as generally happens, he expects his friends are to come forward to help him, and so bores, if he does not impoverish them, and what the devil can an enemy do more?"

"You are a hard-hearted fellow, Axy, which I did not think you. When you were hard up, you would have thought it d——d unkind

had any friend used the selfish arguments you have now expressed. Had I been in England, I would certainly have helped poor Olliphant, and I'm devilish glad that Strathern, who behaved well to him, has now stepped into a fine fortune, for he will make a good use of it."

At four o'clock on the same day that witnessed the interview between the Marquis of Mountserratt and Lord Fitzwarren, the former found himself seated in the boudoir of the wife of the latter.

"And are you happy, dear Olivia?" demanded he, assuming a pensive air; for, piqued by the well-merited reproof of her husband in the morning, which he had not the manliness to resent, he was vile enough to desire to atone himself by making love to the wife, with whom he had formerly carried on a flirtation.

"Happy!" reiterated the lady. "Who could be happy with such a man?"

"Ah, Olivia! had my brother died before my poverty compelled me to wed that dreadful woman who bears my name, *we* might now have been happy!" And the artful *roué* looked in the face of Lady Fitzwarren and sighed deeply.

"So you now say; but your altered manner, your indifference to a long time previously to your having seen that person, proved that you had lost all affection for me, if, indeed, you ever entertained any, which I now greatly doubt."

"Cruel woman, thus to misjudge and reproach me for the very conduct which best vouched for the warm, the disinterested attachment I bore you! Poor, and deeply in debt, would it not have been dreadful on my part to seek to draw you into a marriage with me, which must have entailed nothing but privation and poverty on you! Could I have borne to see you, formed as you are to fill the most distinguished place in society, compelled to drag on existence deprived of all the elegances, nay, even the comforts, that render it supportable?"

"But you were next heir to your brother, your prospect of inheriting his fortune was a very good one, and, had we married, our relations must have done something for us. You see, as things have turned out, we should not, had we wedded, been long condemned to the inconvenience of straitened finances; but you did not love me, and now only profess to have done so because you know that, married as we both are, the truth of your professions cannot be tested."

"Oh, Olivia! dearest, loveliest of women, would that we were at this moment free, and gladly, proudly, would I entreat your acceptance of my hand! I am wretched enough, Heaven knows, at seeing you the wife of another—of one, too, who does not, cannot appreciate you as I do, without your thus cruelly doubting an affection that embitters my life."

"I ought not to listen to you. What avails such declarations now?"

But there was so little of the dignity of offended virtue, or feminine delicacy, in the air and manner of Lady Fitzwarren, that her profligate suitor felt rather encouraged than checked in his advances by this faint attempt at decorum on her part.

"Can you be so barbarous as to ask such a question, Olivia? Is it not a relief when the heart is oppressed with sorrow to pour out its griefs to one who may pity them? Were Fitzwarren worthy of you—could he but render you happy, I might be able to conceal in my own tortured breast the pangs I feel. But when I see his utter indifference to your charms ere he has yet two months called you bride—when I heard him no later than this very day declare that he never liked any creature half so well as his mare Fanny—nay, more, proclaim that he was determined to be sole master of his house and fortune, which means nothing less than that he will treat you, fairest and dearest of your sex! as his slave—how, how can I control the pangs that fill my breast?—how forbear telling you that I love—I adore you!"

"And did he tell you this?" demanded Lady Fitzwarren, her lip trembling with rage, and her face becoming suffused with crimson.

"I swear to you he did; but you have it in your power to be avenged. He who slights such beauty as yours deserves the heaviest punishment that can befall him. Take pity on one who adores you, lovely Olivia, and let my devoted affection console you for the ill-assorted marriage you have made!"

The Marquis of Mountserratt, while uttering this speech, into which he threw as much passionate tenderness as he could assume, fell on his knees before Lady Fitzwarren, and seizing her hand, was in the act of covering it with kisses, when her husband entered the room. The marquis attempted to laugh off the awkward situation in which he had been detected, and the lady, somewhat abashed, stammered something unintelligible in excuse for it. For a moment Lord Fitzwarren was speechless with anger and disdain.

and then, turning to his wife, he said, "After the scene I have just witnessed, this is the last time I will ever consent to see you again. For you, my lord, words are weak to express my contempt. You shall hear from me in an hour, and unless you are as deficient in courage as you are in honourable principles, you shall give me satisfaction."

So saying, Lord Fitzwarren quitted the room, leaving his countess and *ex-dévant* friend the marquis, greatly agitated and embarrassed.

"See what you have done!" exclaimed the lady. "My reputation will be destroyed, my position in society lost, and all because you choose to throw yourself at my feet, when you could just as well have said all you wished while sitting quietly on your chair, when his entrance could not have been of the last consequence."

"You are not the only sufferer," replied the marquis, looking anything but lover-like. "My life will be endangered, or I may kill Fitzwarren, which will compel me to leave England, and abandon the enjoyment of my recently-inherited possessions."

"Go! leave me quickly," said Lady Fitzwarren, "and do not write to me, or approach this house. I must take care not to compromise my reputation, already endangered, if not lost, by your mad passion."

"One word, Olivia," said Lord Mountserratt, his vanity desperately wounded by her coldness and calculation at such a moment, "I was only amusing myself by enacting a scene in a comedy to which Fitzwarren's *mal à propos* entrance has given rather a tragic character. *I did not, do not*, love you. *He* had offended me, and I wished to avenge myself by making a fool of *you*. That was all."

"Leave the room, wretch!—monster of iniquity!—or I will have you expelled by my servants," cried the lady, stamping her foot, and almost choked with passion, an order the marquis promptly obeyed, uttering, as he withdrew—

"Mind, in future, *ma belle*, never let your lovers, should you attract any, leave their chairs while making you declarations."

"Wretch, monster, how I loathe and abhor him!" exclaimed Lady Fitzwarren, as the door closed after Lord Mountserratt. "I would give worlds that Fitzwarren should shoot him;" and here a flood of tears, excited by wounded vanity and anger, filled her eyes. But a few minutes' reflection reminded her of the necessity of taking some steps to preserve her reputation, and it occurred

to her that the best one would be to order her carriage and go out to pay visits, which she did as soon as possible, affecting such gaiety that those with whom she conversed remarked that matrimony had greatly exhilarated her spirits.

That very night she appeared, glittering in diamonds at a ball, and danced with more than usual animation, while her husband and his perfidious friend were arranging the necessary preliminaries for a hostile meeting the next morning, in which the lives of one or both might pay the forfeit of the treachery of the marquis. When questioned on the absence of her lord, she said that he was engaged at cards with some friends, and regretted that play had more attraction for him than balls; "but he is so kind and good," added Lady Fitzwarren, "that I can't bring myself to oppose his wishes."

Her scheme perfectly succeeded. Many wondered at the negligence of a husband who could, so soon after marriage, let his wife go out alone: and all pitied the woman whose husband's time was devoted to play, and who yet evinced such gentleness when referring to that painful circumstance. In short, Lady Fitzwarren enacted the *rôle* of an amiable, cheerful woman so well, that she gained the good opinion of several who, previously to her marriage, had regarded her with dislike; and when the evening papers, on the following day, announced that a duel, attended with fatal results, had that morning taken place at Wimbledon Common, between the Marquis of Mountserratt and the Earl of Fitzwarren, in which the former was dangerously wounded, and the latter shot through the heart, numerous were those who expressed their sympathy for the bereaved widow, and dwelt with pity on her harmless gaiety the previous night, to be followed so soon by so dreadful a catastrophe. Uncountable were the inquiries about her health made at her door, and for the next two days she was the subject of a general interest, which would, probably, have lasted two days more, had not the fall of a favourite *danseuse* on the stage, which occasioned a sprained ankle, eclipsed it. The Marquis of Mountserratt lingered three days, and expired while suffering amputation of the right arm.

The assertion of Lady Fitzwarren that her lord was engaged at play the last night of his life gave rise to a report, extensively circulated, that a dispute between him and the Marquis of Mountserratt at the gaming-table had led to the duel: and as no one except Lady Fitzwarren was acquainted with the real cause, this rumour gained increased belief, and people, while pitying "the poor bereaved

widow," as she was styled, added "that, perhaps, everything considered, it was as well that her husband died before he had ruined himself, and her, too; an event which, from his devotion to play, they looked on as inevitable." Thus, the well-meaning, good-natured, but unthinking peer descended to an untimely grave, stamped as a gambler, and unlamented, save by Strathern and a few of his former friends, who knew his goodness of heart; while his artful and unfeeling wife came into possession of the large dower settled on her by her generous lord, and was looked on as an amiable woman, greatly to be pitied in losing a husband to whom she was much attached.

Strathern, having now come into the noble fortune of Lord Argentyn, paid off the account of Mr. Drinkwater, who, rather, as he declared, than forfeit the good opinion of a gentleman of such distinguished taste as Mr. Strathern, consented to accept some thousands less than his original demand; and Mr. Papworth, whose advice his client followed on this occasion, entered into an arrangement for the immediate completion of Strathern House by contract.

Lord and Lady Delmington, now Marquis and Marchioness of Roehampton, arrived in England in due time from Naples, the health of the marquis greatly improved by the sea voyage recommended by his physicians, and bringing with them their infant son, now some two months old. Most cordial and affectionate was the meeting between them and Strathern. But when was happiness without alloy? The marquis, blessed with all that could render life enjoyable, was haunted by the dread that his disobedience had shortened the days of his father, and, as he looked on his own child, he prayed that he might not be punished in him. The marchioness, a dotting wife and happy mother, looked more beautiful than ever, and remained as unsophisticated and unaffected as when, a timid, weeping bride, Lord Delmington had led her to the altar.

A few days after their arrival in London, the chaplain of the late marquis, a worthy and pious man, waited on the ailing pair, and placed in the hand of Lord Roehampton a short letter, written by his dying father, the day previous to his death. In it he expressed his deep regret that his own obduracy had deprived him of the comfort of seeing his dear son before he closed his eyes for ever, and bequeathed to him, in the most affectionate terms, his forgiveness and blessing, which were also extended to his daughters-in-law. The tears that fell on this precious token of pardon and paternal love proved how deeply it was appreciated, and healing was the balm it

infused into the wounded hearts of the amiable young couple, who, no longer weighed down by the dread of a father's curse, felt the truest gratitude for his having at last relented in their favour.

In a few weeks after, the *Morning Post*, the chronicle of fashionable intelligence, announced the arrival of the Marchioness of Mountserratt and suite in London. The marquis having died intestate, and never having executed any marriage settlement, the widowed marchioness came over to England, post-haste, to claim her thirds of his property, to which her legal advisers informed her she was entitled. Great was her satisfaction at finding herself once more free; not that she had suffered any restraint from the matrimonial shackles she had lately worn, but she had been haunted by a dread that, great as was her unprincipled lord's fortune, his extravagance and love of play might one day lead to the necessity of his having recourse to hers, and she had often trembled at the possibility of this contingency. But now, to be not only relieved from this dread, but to come into the possession of a great increase of income, was, she considered, a piece of wonderful good luck; and, in her gratitude for it, she made her *dame de compagnie*, Mrs. Bernard, a present of five thousand pounds, and bestowed a gift of a similar amount on Mademoiselle Justine. Mr. Webworth, who, at Naples and Paris, had rendered himself useful to Lady Mountserratt in inspecting her bills of fare, and declining all other dinner-engagements in order to accept hers, followed her to England, where, having learned her large accession to fortune, he ventured to hint how much he stood in need of an increase to his very scanty income.

"I have been thinking of you," said the marchioness; "and if you will take holy orders, I will purchase you the presentation to a living, and appoint you my chaplain; for every great lady has, I hear, a chaplain."

Webworth declined this proposal; and having convinced the lady of the utter impracticability of its being carried into execution, she consented to allow him two hundred a year and a seat at her table, which, with the annuity formerly settled on him by his deceased friend, Lord Fitzwarren, enabled him to live with comfort, in the enjoyment of those luxuries for which he had been always willing to barter his self-respect.

"Well, Justin, what do you think now?" said the marchioness. "You see my marriage was not, after all, a bad one. First, I got a fine title, and now comes a good fortune."

"I tink *madame la marquise* merits all de good fortune in de world, for dere is no ladi so generous, so *aimable*, or so beautiful; and so I know tought de Duc de Beauregard. Vot tronsome man, and how he love *madame la marquise*!"

"Do you really think he loved me much, Justin?"

"Tink, *madame la marquise*! Vy, he positively adored you. *Ah! le pauvre duc!*"

"So poor Lady Sophia Wellerby used to say. I'm sure, Justin, *she* was very fond of me, for she used to say such agreeable things to me! She always made me feel satisfied with myself."

"Ah! *madame la marquise* vas deceived. Lady Sophie veri *fausse voman*. She vant to rival you in de heart of de Duc de Beauregard, and i hate her, for she laugh at *madame la marquise* vid all the milords and miladis, vich I did hear from de *femmes de chambre* of several of dem who heard it from de *maîtres d'hôtel* who vere present."

"Yes, so you said, but I can't believe it; besides, what should she find in *me* to laugh at?"

"Dat is *précisément* vat I say. But dey told me dat she said such spiteful tings, such vicked tings, as I could not repent. I could forgive moche, but to say dat *madame la marquise* vas so veri ugly, and have red hair—oh! dat vas too bad!"

"What a false, ungrateful creature, and after pretending to love me so much!"

"Ah! *madame la marquise* must never make friendships vid ladies of *de haute famille*, for dey are all envious, and vill betray her."

"But yet, Justin, Lady Sophia so often told me that she loved me better than any one in the world, and entrusted me with such family secrets, that I cannot bring myself to believe she was false. Perhaps the servants who told you did not speak truth."

"Ah! *madame la marquise*, dey spoke only de truth—dat vicked ladi only lofed you for *les cadeaux*, dat is de presents, and for your moneys."

"Then she shall never have another present from me, and I will scratch out her name from my will, which she made me put in it."

CHAPTER LVIII

The mariner, by many an adverse gale
 And angry billow tossed upon the main,
 Far, far from land, how joys he when his sail
 With fav'ring breeze turns to his home again!
 So those who've struggled on the troubled sea
 Of life, rejoice when once again they near
 The haven where they long have yearn'd to be,
 The port to all their hopes and wishes dear,
 And ev'ry danger past, enjoy sweet rest,
 Conscious of blessing, and of being blest.

Though anxious to return to Sydney Park, Mrs. and Miss Sydney were detained by business, consequent on their late inheritance, which required their frequent presence in London, and they preferred remaining at Thames Grove to taking up their abode in the metropolis, to which place they drove two or three times a week. Mr. Wandsworth one day mentioned to Mrs. Sydney that he had the previous one made a curious discovery.

"I hesitated, madam, whether or not I could communicate it to you without a breach of confidence," said that worthy man; "but good actions, and especially those performed in secret, are too rare not to merit notice. Previous to Mr. Sydney's death and when exaggerated rumours were afloat respecting the difficulties in which you and Miss Sydney were plagued through the loss of her estates, a gentleman one day called on me, and wished to place in my hands a considerable sum, to be paid annually, as he said, for your joint use. I, of course, declined to accept it, assuring him of the fact that you did not stand in need of assistance, and he then requested that the circumstance should not be named to you. He did not entrust me with his name, but his appearance and manner were so prepossessing, that he left a very favourable impression on my mind. Yesterday was speaking to Mr. Papworth in the street, when this same gentleman drove past with another, and I, instantly recognising him, inquired if Mr. Papworth could inform me of his name.

"That is the richest of my clients, Mr. Strathern, who has within a few days inherited the large estate of the late Lord Argentyn," said Mr. Papworth.

“What, the gentleman for whose use I lately offered you a loan on the part of one of my clients?” asked I.

“‘The same,’ replied he.”

“And has Mr. Strathern really inherited a large fortune?” inquired Mrs. Sydney.

“Such is the fact, madam.”

“I am truly glad of it, for his sake, and the more so now that I know his kind and thoughtful intentions towards my daughter and myself, when he believed that we stood in need of his generosity.”

“Ay, madam, and we must not forget that, at the very time he came to lodge a large sum in my hands for your use, he was under the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, which, though only of a temporary nature, as Mr. Papworth explained to me, were, nevertheless, of a painful kind, and exposed him to the mortification of being arrested.”

“Good, kind Strathern!” exclaimed Mrs. Sydney, “how fully has he justified the opinion I formed of him! I thank you, Mr. Wandsworth, for having communicated the fact of his visit to you and its motive. Such actions should not be concealed from those whom they were meant to serve.”

When Mr. Wandsworth had departed, Mrs. Sydney joined her daughter in the pleasure-ground, and communicated to her all that he had related. A bright colour rose to Louisa’s face, but she made no comment on Strathern’s generous intentions in her and her mother’s favour.

“Was it not kind and thoughtful of him?” demanded Mrs. Sydney, somewhat disappointed by the silence of her daughter.

“I am not surprised,” replied she; “want of generosity is not among the failings of Mr. Strathern. I am heartily glad of his accession to fortune, for his is a spirit that would not be happy with limited means, after having been accustomed to large ones.”

Strange to say, Louisa was *not* greatly pleased at hearing that her former lover had come into possession of a vast fortune. Not that she did not wish that all good might be his; but, while believing him to be poor, and assailed by the most humiliating of all annoyances, importunate creditors, she thought herself justified in lavishing on him a pity and interest, the motive of which she cheated herself into the belief was founded solely on compassion, when, the truth was, it originated in a much more tender sentiment. Now that Strathern’s pecuniary difficulties no longer offered an excuse for the all-engrossing interest she had lately experienced about

him, the state of her own heart became more than ever revealed to her, and she was sorry to find that henceforth she should have no plea for continually thinking of him when alone, and talking of him with her mother, as she had for some time been accustomed to do, and which had been a secret source of pleasure to her. No, the rich Strathern could no longer be an object of pity, and, consequently, his name must be a prohibited one from their conversation.

Mrs. Sydney, with all a woman's *finesse* and quickness of apprehension, divined what was passing in the mind of her daughter; while the latter, silent and pensive, urged the excuse of a nervous headache, that never-failing apology for low spirits, for not being in a more communicative mood. But, though Louisa avoided speaking of Strathern, she could not banish him from her thoughts; and she was forced to confess to herself, after a nearly sleepless night, that the rich man occupied her mind quite as much as when he had been poor. She wondered where was now that fair but sinful woman with whom she left him at Como, yet was angry with herself for bestowing a single thought on one so unworthy. What could it now be to *her* where she was? Nothing, positively nothing. Nevertheless, she felt that she would give thousands to know that Strathern had shaken off that immoral connexion; for his own sake alone she wished it—so at least she persuaded herself, for, as she again and again mentally asserted, it could be nothing to her. How painful was it that she could never think of him without the hateful recollection of that woman intruding itself! Yet how beautiful she was! It was no wonder that Strathern yielded to her seductive charms. What man could resist them, when *she*—a woman, and a jealous one she in her heart of hearts acknowledged herself to be—was compelled to admit that she had never previously beheld such loveliness.

These reflections were little calculated to encourage the approach of "Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep;" and the beams of an autumnal sun shone brightly through her windows, before Louisa Sydney closed her weary eyes in slumber. When she did, her dreams were influenced by the painful thoughts that had occupied her when awake. Again the lovely object of her jealousy seemed to stand before her, leaning on the arm of Strathern, who appeared so engrossed by her as to be wholly regardless of the presence of his betrothed wife; and Louisa, starting from her pillow, rubbed her eyes, almost expecting to see the two persons of whom

she dreamt stand before her. "It was but a dream," murmured she, "but oh! what a painful one! Would that I could banish that woman for ever from my memory!"

Lord and Lady Roehampton pressed Strathern so much to accompany them to Roehampton Castle, that he at length assented to their wishes. He found in their society the only antidote to the gloom that pervaded his mind, a gloom engendered no less by the severe disappointment experienced in his affections than by the knowledge of the world, forced on him by his temporary embarrassment. The bandage which had hitherto concealed the dark realities of life, and kept in shade the fickleness and heartlessness of mankind, had been torn from his eyes for ever by the rude hand of adversity; and, though the visit of that stern monitor had been but brief, the experience it had brought him was not of a nature to allow his natural cheerfulness to be soon restored, even had he not another and deeper cause for despondency in the inexplicable conduct of the woman he still so fondly loved.

The attachment of two such friends as Lord and Lady Roehampton was a balm to Strathern's heart. Filled with the liveliest gratitude for his brotherly regard and boundless generosity towards them, this amiable pair lavished on him the most delicate and unceasing marks of attention: and he for a short time forgot his own cares in the satisfaction which he experienced at witnessing their reception at Roehampton Castle, and the domestic happiness they were enjoying. The grandeur of her stately home, and the respectful deference with which she was treated by the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood, who flocked to visit her as soon after her arrival as etiquette permitted, produced no change in the simple and unassuming woman, whose whole happiness consisted in her husband and child, and who, undazzled by the gauds of wealth, rank, and splendour, proved every hour, and by every action of her life, that love, and love only, had influenced her when she wedded the heir to the princely dwelling and broad domains of which she was now the happy and honoured mistress.

The fond husband was prouder of his wife than of all his other possessions; and, as he marked how rapidly her artless sweetness of manner conquered the prejudices of those who had previously imagined that a perfect equality of station was requisite to happiness in wedded life, he would sigh with regret that his father, who had accorded him so full a pardon for the only act of disobedience he had ever committed, had not lived to know and love the gentle

and amiable being who would have proved so duteous a daughter to him. It was a pleasant sight to behold this youthful couple so happy in themselves, anxious to extend happiness to those around them. Each day witnessed some step taken in advancement of the instruction and comfort of the poor: schools formed, almshouses endowed, and private charities judiciously administered. Often would Strathern think what pleasure it would have afforded him to have seen Louisa—*his* Louisa, as, in spite of all that had occurred, he would fain still call her—united by the bonds of friendship with the amiable and excellent Lady Roehampton.

The Duke and Duchess of Nevillecourt, who were the nearest neighbours to Roehampton Castle, were so fascinated by the winning graces of the marchioness, that habits of intimacy were soon formed between the two families, and they frequently dined together. Lord and Lady Roehampton and their guest had accepted an invitation to dinner at Nevillecourt on a certain day, to meet some of the neighbouring families of distinction. On arriving, they found the party assembled in the library, and after the first greetings were over, a Lady Donnington, the mistress of a fine seat a few miles distant, addressing Lady Roehampton, said, “You must, my dear lady, permit me to present to you two very dear friends of mine, who only came to me yesterday. Lady Roehampton, Mrs. and Miss Sydney.”

Both mother and daughter positively started with surprise when, in the beautiful woman before them, they recognised the well-remembered face of the companion of Strathern at the Coliseum. Lady Roehampton also recognised Miss Sydney; and the unaccountable coldness, to call it by no harsher name, of that young lady at their interview at Como flashing across her mind at the instant, gave a timidity to her manner that, coupled with the evident surprise of Mrs. and Miss Sydney, somewhat embarrassed Lady Donnington.

While this scene was occurring in one corner of the large library, Strathern, who had, after making his bow to the duchess, stopped to speak to some of the men, now came forward, and who can express his surprise when his eyes met those of Mrs. Sydney and Louisa—the face of the latter appearing radiant, so bright were the blushes that suffused her cheeks, and the lustre that sparkled in her eyes as they met his gaze! He stood confounded, and hesitating whether to approach, when Mrs. Sydney smiled, and bowed to him with such cordiality that he walked up and took her offered hand.

Louisa also extended hers, tremulous with emotion, and as he pressed it he felt his heart throb with delight.

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure," said Mrs. Sydney. "We only arrived on a visit to my relation, Lady Donnington, yesterday, and found an engagement to accompany her here to dinner to-day, the Duchess of Nevillecourt being an old friend of mine. You are, I suppose, staying in the neighbourhood?"

"Yes, I have been for some time on a visit to my friends, Lord and Lady Roehampton, whose seat is only a few miles distant."

How eagerly did Louisa listen to the conversation carrying on between her mother and Strathern! The presence of the never-forgotten lady she had seen at the Coliseum and at Como, in that circle, and introduced to her by Lady Donnington as the Marchioness of Roehampton, convinced her that hitherto *she* must have been labouring under some strange and terrible mistake; and, if so, how had she wronged Strathern! Bitterly, however, had *she* suffered from the mistake. Long months of chagrin had been her portion; and if she had injured her lover by her suspicions, as she now believed she must have done, *he* was to blame for the mystery and concealment he had made relative to his presence with Lady Roehampton. Oh! how much misery would have been saved to both had he been more frank and confidential with her! But why had he stooped to prevarication? What could be the motive for such extraordinary conduct?

Such were the reflections that suggested themselves to Louisa, as, with a beating heart, she listened to every word that dropped from the lips of Strathern. Never sounded the most perfect music so sweetly to her ears as did now his accents. She forgot that she was surrounded by strangers, that as yet nothing had been explained, in the joy of hearing her lover converse once more with her mother in tones of renewed amity. But, if Louisa experienced surprise and delight at this unexpected encounter, what were the feelings of Strathern? Astonishment at the kind reception he met with both from mother and daughter was succeeded by unmingled delight. What could have led to this happy, this blessed change? Had they discovered that they had wronged him, and had they repented their injustice and cruelty? Yes, it must be so; and proud as was his nature, he felt that in the joy, the transport of being again restored to the affection of her on whom, in spite of all her cruelty, he still doted, he could pardon and forget all the misery he had for so many months borne.

"How long has Lord Roehampton been married?" asked Mrs. Sydney.

"Some fourteen or fifteen months," replied Strathern.

"Then he was married when he passed through Rome," observed Mrs. Sydney. "Did Lady Roehampton then accompany him?"

"Yes; but as their marriage was a private one, and had not then been acknowledged to his father, a stern and severe parent, I was not at liberty to reveal it until it had first been disclosed to him."

"Ah! now I understand all," said Mrs. Sydney. "Would to Heaven that you had at the time confided this secret to me!"

At this moment dinner was announced, and a general movement was the consequence. Strathern hovered near Louisa, who, trembling with joyful emotion, felt that never had she loved him so tenderly as at this moment, when, conscious of the injustice of all her former suspicions and filled with gratitude for the sincere and unchangeable affection on his part, which had withstood an ill-treatment on hers, for which he could not even imagine a cause, he stood near her with eyes sparkling with the same love as ever, shewing in every glance that he was ready to renew those vows which her pride and jealousy had broken. Her countenance was so expressive of her feelings, that Strathern ventured to offer her his arm, to lead her to the *salle à manger*. She accepted it with eagerness; and, as he felt her snowy arm tremble on his, he could not resist asking her, in accents so low that no ear but hers could hear them, "May I hope?"

"Yes, dearest Henry; but you have much to pardon," was the whispered reply; and the fair arm that rested on his was gently pressed. O! how the lover longed to throw himself at the feet of his adored mistress, to thank her for this blessed avowal! He seemed to tread on air. His heart beat wildly with rapture, and he felt that, from whatever cause the estrangement that had embittered so many months of his life might have proceeded, it was now forever removed, and Louisa—his dearly-beloved, his beautiful Louisa, would soon be his own. He had no eyes, no ears, save for her; and Lord and Lady Roehampton, and Mrs. Sydney, who frequently glanced at him and his companion, marked with pleasure his animated and happy face.

"You will permit me to go to Lady Donnington's early to-morrow,

will you not, dearest?" asked the joyful lover. "I have a thousand things to say to you."

"And I, Henry, long to tell you how much I have wronged you, and how I now repent it."

Never was a good dinner done such injustice to as the Duke of Nevillecourt's by Louisa Sydney and Strathern. To conceal their emotions, they affected to eat, but they were too much excited to retain any appetite, and suffered their plates to be removed without even being conscious of what dainties had been upon them.

When the ladies retired to the drawing-room, Louisa Sydney, with great timidity, approached Lady Roehampton. "I feel that I have many apologies to offer your ladyship," said she, assuming one of her sweetest smiles, "for my apparent ingratitude and rudeness, when you so kindly lent your assistance to restore me to life, at the Lake of Como. Pray pardon me. I was then very unhappy, had been suffering great anxiety and wretchedness, and hardly knew what I did. Be generous, and extend to me your forgiveness;" and she held out her hand to Lady Roehampton; who, clasping it within her own, replied,

"Ah! dear Miss Sydney, I will forgive you everything, if you promise to atone to the best and dearest friend my husband and I possess, for all the unhappiness you made him suffer there. If you had but witnessed it, as we did, you would acknowledge that he is as true and devoted a lover, as we have proved him to be a friend."

A conversation commenced in so confidential a strain, soon led to a perfect understanding between these two charming women. Both high-minded, and of what is called a romantic turn, each quickly comprehended the feelings of the other, and felt spring up in her heart the seeds of a friendship, which it only required time to ripen and bring to maturity. When the gentlemen joined the ladies, and Strathern counted the moments until they had done so, he was delighted to find his adored Louisa conversing with Lady Roehampton in as friendly and cordial a manner as if they had been old and dear friends. Lord Roehampton came up to his wife, who immediately presented him to Miss Sydney, to whom he evinced much less attention than the marchioness could have wished; and, seeing that Louisa was now engrossed by Strathern, she whispered in her husband's ear, "Miss Sydney is a delightful person, and I am charmed with her."

"Ay, that's your way, Mary, always ready to think favourably of every one ; but I can't so easily forgive or forget all the unhappiness she caused the best fellow in the whole world, and the truest friend."

"She has told me that she was then very wretched, dearest."

"I don't know how that may be, but I'll swear she deserved to be so, for tormenting the noblest creature that ever lived."

"Pray oblige me, and don't look so stern," said Lady Roehampton, laying her little white hand on her lord's arm. "Indeed you must like her, dearest, for I already feel towards her as we ought towards one who will, I am convinced, soon be the wife of our best friend."

"You do with me just as you will, Mary ; so, I suppose, whether I like it or not, I must become pleased with your new friend."

"Miss Sydney, as you have extended your kindness to *me*, I must ask you to forget that my husband is only a new acquaintance," said Lady Roehampton, turning to Louisa, who was in earnest conversation with her lover.

Strathern looked so happy, that Lord Roehampton, justly attributing the change to the good understanding which was now so apparent between his friend and her, observed, that "Miss Sydney possessed such a wonderful power in metamorphosing gloomy mortals into joyous ones ;" and he smilingly pointed at Strathern, "that he almost feared to trust himself near so dangerous a person."

"I never before suspected that *you* were gloomy," replied Strathern ; "but, if you were, you must admit the metamorphose would be a very desirable one."

"I was gloomy enough in Italy when I saw you almost ready to hang yourself," observed Lord Roehampton, somewhat spitefully ; "and I don't think that even the power of an enchantress could have then rendered me gay."

This artless speech, proving so well the unhappiness she had inflicted on her lover, would have touched Louisa Sydney, had he even been culpable to the extent which she had formerly believed ; but knowing, as she now did, his perfect freedom from any sin towards love or her, it melted her feelings towards him so much that tears started to her beautiful eyes.

Strathern longed to chase them away with his lips ; and Lady

Roehampton, with womanly sweetness, pressed the hand of her new friend as she whispered, "You must pardon my husband; he thinks so highly of Mr. Strathern, that he cannot bear that he should even be suspected of doing wrong."

"Ay, I see that I shall be as fascinated as my wife and Strathern are," observed the marquis, touched by the tearful eyes of Miss Sydney; "so I yield at once to the power of this fair lady," bowing to Louisa, "and solicit the favour of touching the hand that wields so easily the wand of enchantment."

Louisa extended her hand to him with unaffected cordiality, and he pressed it to his lips.

Mrs. Sydney, who had watched all that was passing in the little circle in which she took so deep an interest, now joined it; and Lord Roehampton, pleased to discover in her an intimate friend of the dear mother whose memory he so fondly cherished, pressed her and her daughter to pay Lady Roehampton a visit.

"I hardly dare believe in my present felicity," said Strathern to Mrs. Sydney. "I once before thought myself on the brink of happiness, when a change I could never account for, and which I felt conscious I had not deserved, rendered me the most miserable of men. May I, dear madam, once more indulge the hope that the happiness I now feel will be permanent, and that it will be followed by still greater felicity?"

"We have much to blame ourselves for, dear Mr. Strathern," was the reply, "and you have much to forgive. We ought never to have doubted you, or, if appearances could justify doubt, we ought to have frankly told you our suspicions. That fatal evening, for so I must consider it from the sufferings it entailed on my child, that you left us to dine with your friend, Lord Delmington, we walked in the Coliseum, and, while concealed from observation in the deep shade of one of the entrances, we saw you *tête à tête* with a lady of surpassing beauty. We saw you gaze on her face, heard her ask if she might rely on you, and heard you pledge yourself to be faithful. The most terrible suspicion took possession of our minds. Louisa's wretchedness I cannot describe. In vain I urged her to let me tell you what we had seen and heard, and our consequent anxiety. She would not permit it; and insisted that if there was nothing wrong, you would, when you came the next day, explain the circumstance which had so much alarmed and grieved her. You did not, alas! refer to it, and this confirmed her fears

“The next day, Mr. Rhymer came and told us that he met you *tête à tête* at St. Peter’s with a beautiful person, to whom you refused to present him. This circumstance, coupled with your silence to us, left no doubt on our minds that the person with whom you were seen was not one whom you could name to us, and my daughter’s state of mind became such that she implored me to leave Rome at once. After Mr. Rhymer’s communication, she determined to see you no more. The morning we left Rome your appearance in the street at such an hour, and in the dress of the preceding evening, all, all tended to confirm the terrible suspicion we had formed. Then the meeting you at Como, accompanied by the same lady, gave the last touch to my daughter’s despair. Severely has she suffered; and if you feel, as I confess you have reason to do, offended at our unjust suspicions and want of candour in avowing them to you, remember that your own conduct in concealing from us the name of the lady with whom you were seen, gave rise to them.”

“You are right; yes, I see it all now. I ought not to have accepted the confidence of my friend, Delmington, without his permission to extend it to my affianced wife. Oh! how much unhappiness might we have been saved had you, dear Mrs. Sydney, told me that you had seen me at the Coliseum, for I should then have solicited Delmington’s leave to confide in you! He was then so ill, that I almost despaired of his recovery. He asked me to give my arm to his wife at the Coliseum, and at St. Peter’s, while he remained at the entrance to both places in his carriage. That evening he broke a blood-vessel in the chest; I had sat up all night with him, and was returning home on that morning when I saw you leaving Rome. He continued so ill, that I acceded to his request to accompany them to Como.”

“Where you saved my child’s life!” added Mrs. Syney. “Oh! how ungrateful, how lost to all feeling, you must have thought us!”

“Heaven be thanked! all misunderstandings are now over, and for ever,” said Strathern, “and I am again restored to happiness. Will you, my dear madam, in consideration of all I have suffered, use your influence with my adored Louisa to induce her to consent to be mine with as little delay as possible? Remember that, when the misunderstanding which prevented our union took place, I was to have had the felicity of leading her to the altar when we reached England. Promise me that you will now induce her to abridge my

probation, and bless me with her hand as soon as the settlements can be drawn."

"I promise," replied Mrs. Sydney; "for we owe you a reparation for our unjust suspicions."

Sweet were the tears shed that night by Louisa Sydney on the bosom of her fond mother, ere she retired to her pillow. "Had I but followed your advice, how much wretchedness should we all have been saved! You were less unjust to him than I was, and wished, by informing him of our having seen him at the Coliseum, to give him an opportunity of explaining his presence there. But I, self-willed and obstinate, refused to be governed by your better judgment, and have merited the sufferings I have endured. But he, conscious of his own innocence, how cruel was his position, and how faithfully must he have loved me when his attachment could have resisted the contumely and harshness he experienced at my hands! Never, never can I sufficiently atone to him for it?"

"There is one way, my dear Louisa, of doing this. Consent to be his at once."

"You, dearest mother, shall henceforth guide your child. This hand is yours to bestow when you wish it;" and the blushing girl placed her small white hand in that of her parent. "I hardly dared to look at the sweet, innocent face of Lady Roehampton this evening," said Miss Sydney, "after having wronged her by my insulting suspicions. I would not for worlds that she should know I ever had entertained them. And dear Henry!—how good, how noble of him to pardon my injustice!"

Peaceful were the slumbers, and happy were the dreams, of both mother and daughter that night, and glad was the awaking to the certainty that all misunderstandings were now over for ever.

In six weeks from that happy day of reconciliation, Strathern led Louisa Sydney to the hymeneal altar, in the presence of the Marquis and Marchioness of Roehampton; and the happy couple set off for Sydney Park, to spend the honeymoon, in compliance with the desire of the bride.

They have now been three years married, and are the parents of two beautiful boys, on whom Mrs. Sydney doats with all a grandmother's fondness. Strathern House had been two years completed, and the fine taste of its decorations and its furniture accord well with the treasures of art which it contains. Happy in

their domestic circle, and diffusing happiness around them, their past trials and disappointments are only now remembered to enhance present felicity; and when their splendid mansion is opened to give some brilliant *fête*, it is allowed, by all those who attend it, with one solitary exception, that the parties at Strathern House surpass all others. The exception is Mr. Rhymer, who prefers the *fêtes* of some two or three dukes of his acquaintance.

THE END.





